THE WITCHER® 2
ASSASSINS OF KINGS

ARTBOOK

2011

INDEX

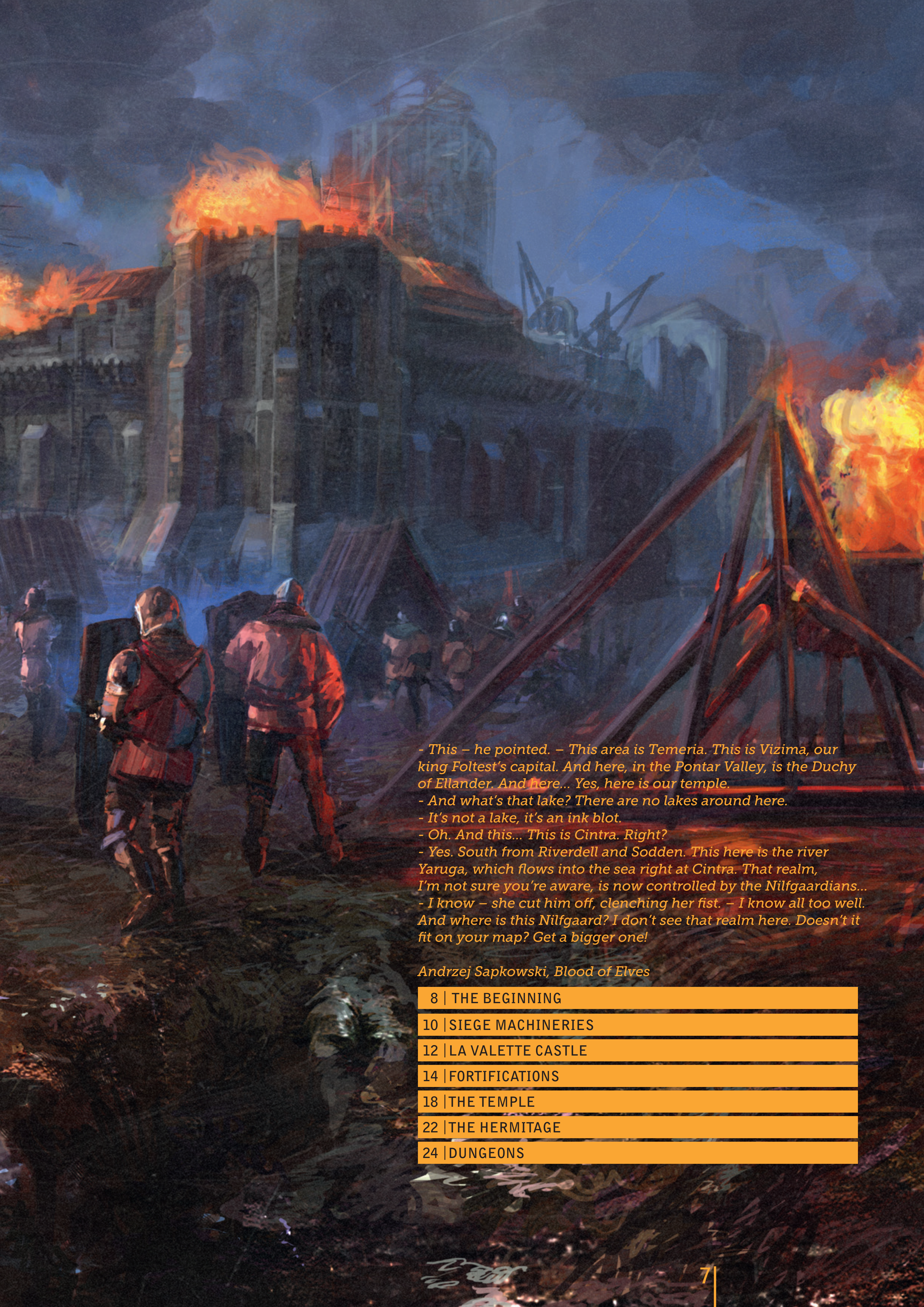


One of our primary goals when working on this part of the game was to base clothing and architecture on actual historical ones. This also included other elements of the world we were building, so the aesthetics of the Northern Kingdoms' map were to be as close to medieval cartographic standards as possible. It was a great chance for our graphic artists to show their skills. The results of their efforts and truly Benedictine work can be seen above. The color map features stylized portraits of the rulers of the three most powerful kingdoms – Redania, Temeria and Kaedwen.



An empty throne with a crown placed on it symbolizes the Aedirnian interregnum, while the troubles in the La Valette lands and in Lormark are marked with flames on the boundaries of these domains. The map's decorative rim is adorned with plant motifs, fantastic animals and allegoric silhouettes holding standards and heraldic shields. The alphabet used to write names on the map is Glagolitic – the eldest Slavic alphabet that first appeared in early Middle Ages.

PROLOGUE



- This – he pointed. – This area is Temeria. This is Vizima, our king Foltest's capital. And here, in the Pontar Valley, is the Duchy of Ellander. And here... Yes, here is our temple.
- And what's that lake? There are no lakes around here.
- It's not a lake, it's an ink blot.
- Oh. And this... This is Cintra. Right?
- Yes. South from Riverdell and Sodden. This here is the river Yaruga, which flows into the sea right at Cintra. That realm, I'm not sure you're aware, is now controlled by the Nilfgaardians...
- I know – she cut him off, clenching her fist. – I know all too well. And where is this Nilfgaard? I don't see that realm here. Doesn't it fit on your map? Get a bigger one!

Andrzej Sapkowski, Blood of Elves

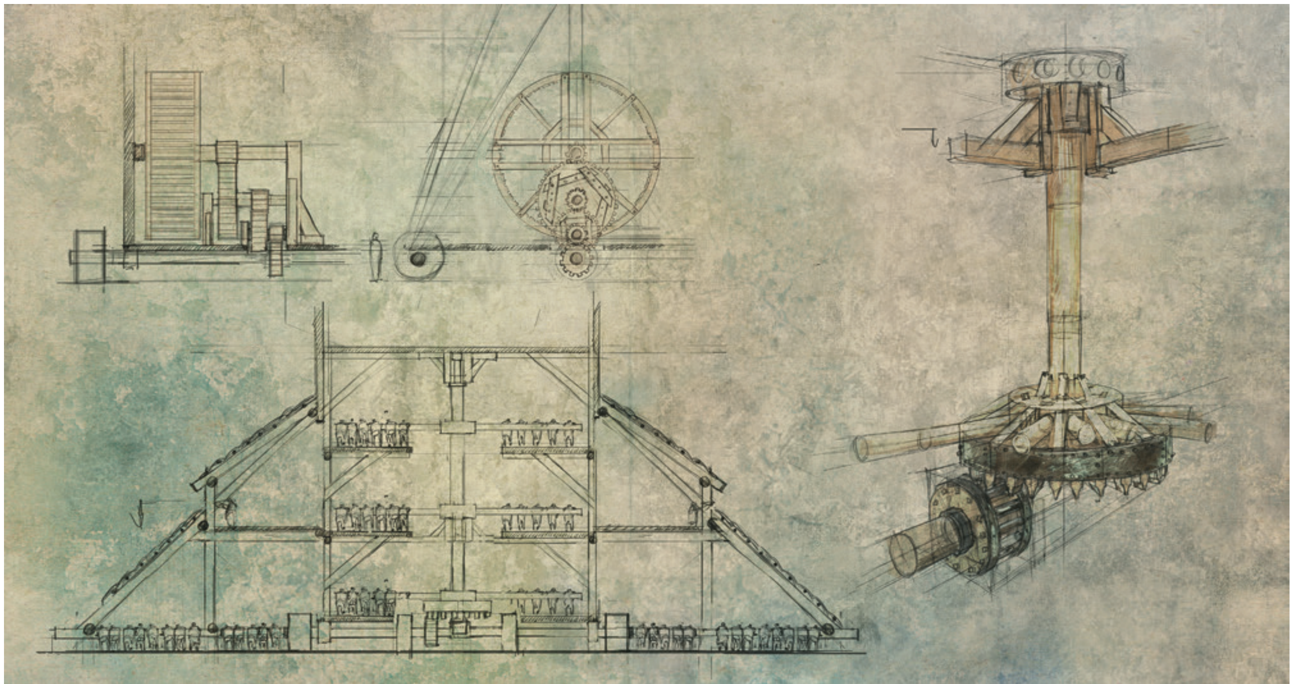


Some of the illustrations found on the following pages are not a precise representation of places found in the game. Many of them serve to give an idea of the nature and climate of a location. In these cases the artists did not focus on details, but on presenting the atmosphere of a scene. The use of shapes and colors is useful in that regard. Such drawings make it easier for graphic artists and designers to work on a given part of the game.



One of the first scenes takes part in King Foltest's camp beneath the walls of the rebellious House La Valette's fortress. Geralt wakes up in a tent by Triss' side, on the day of the victorious assault on the castle. The above drawing is an impression of that moment. We wanted to build the atmosphere of an illusory calmness. The interior is bathed in warm light, some papers and everyday items are strewn about. In a moment, the witcher will go outside to accompany Foltest in storming the fortress – and nothing will be like before again.

The siege has gone on for some time now, and the Temerian army is preparing for the final attack. Geralt reaches the castle walls using a huge siege tower. Its sketches are found on the illustrations nearby. The wooden roof protects the crew pushing the construct toward the fortress, and a system of levers worthy of Leonardo da Vinci allows the soldiers on upper floors to propel it. We wanted to create a believable way of putting a machine this huge in motion. Our technical solutions such as capstans inside the tower were inspired, among other things, by the attempts to reconstruct the appearance of the gigantic siege tower used in the Siege of Rhodes in 305 BCE.



The battering ram's head is shod in iron and takes the form of a boar's head. The device, propelled by the strength of human arms, is mounted atop the siege tower and is designed to crush battlements and create a breach, making the assault easier.

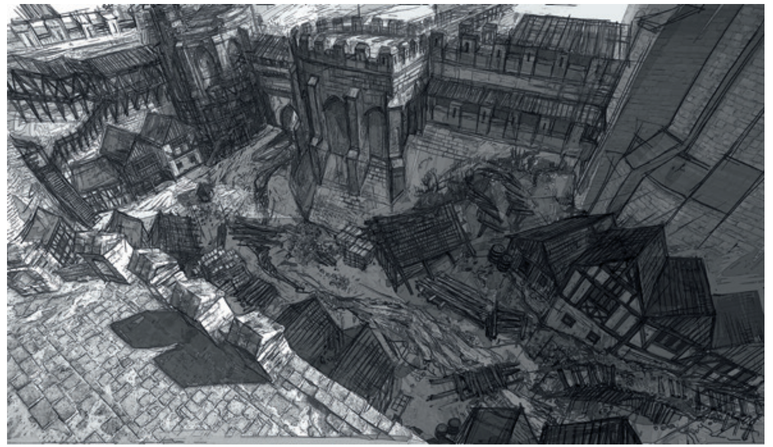
The concept sketches below show various versions of the battering ram's head.



Castle La Valette is an impressive defensive structure. Because of its location near the White Bridge, an important crossing on the Pontar, the fortress is of great strategic importance. Its main part is located on an island in the river's middle, but the fortified bridgehead on the southern bank has recently begun to be expanded. Foltest was not shy of exploiting the parts under construction as the castle's weakest link.



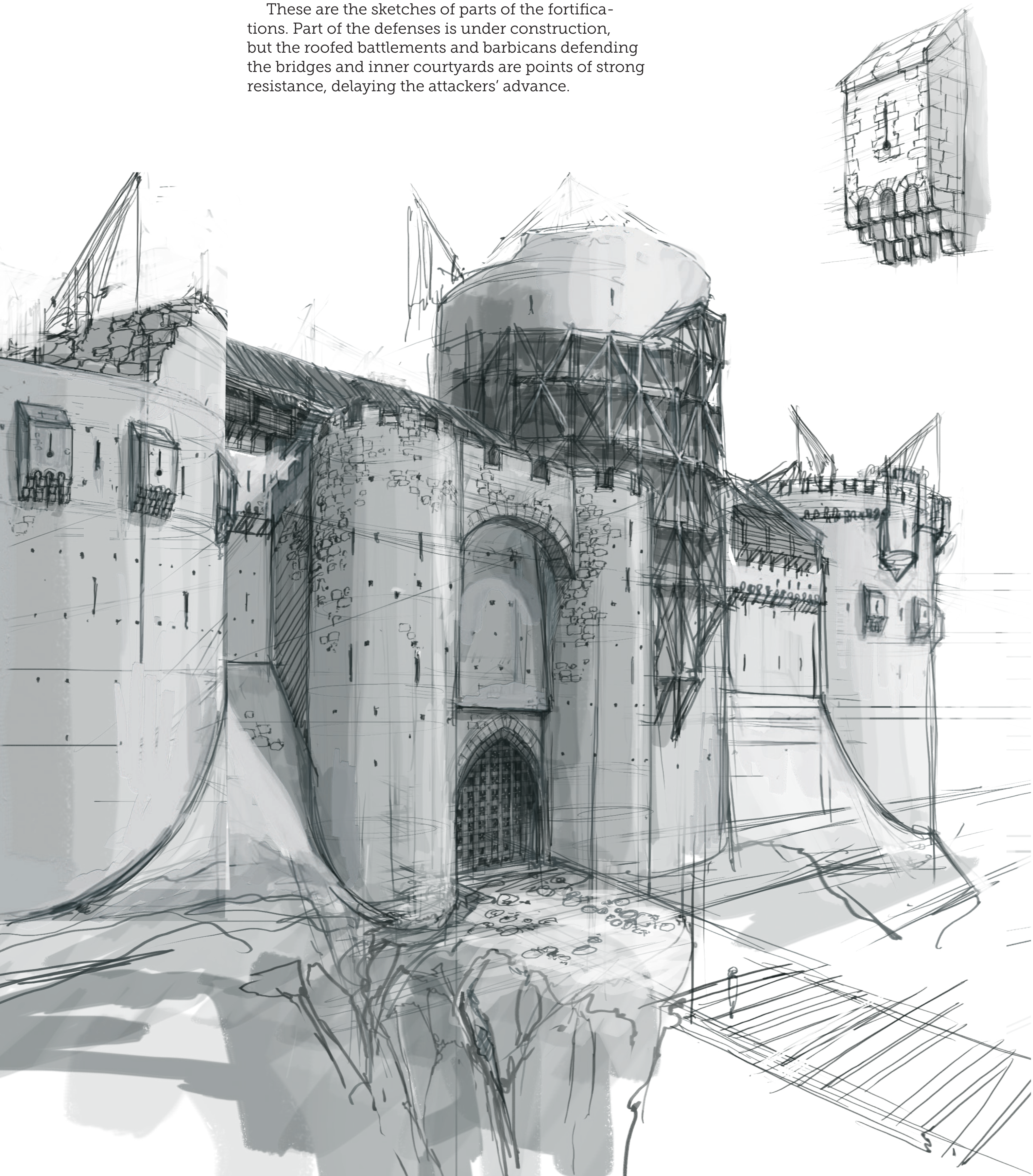
We wanted the fortress' interior to be as realistic as possible. When planning it out, we wondered what the streets would look like and the location of the squares, courtyards and gates. We even remembered to place a graveyard – after all the locals had to bury their dead somewhere.

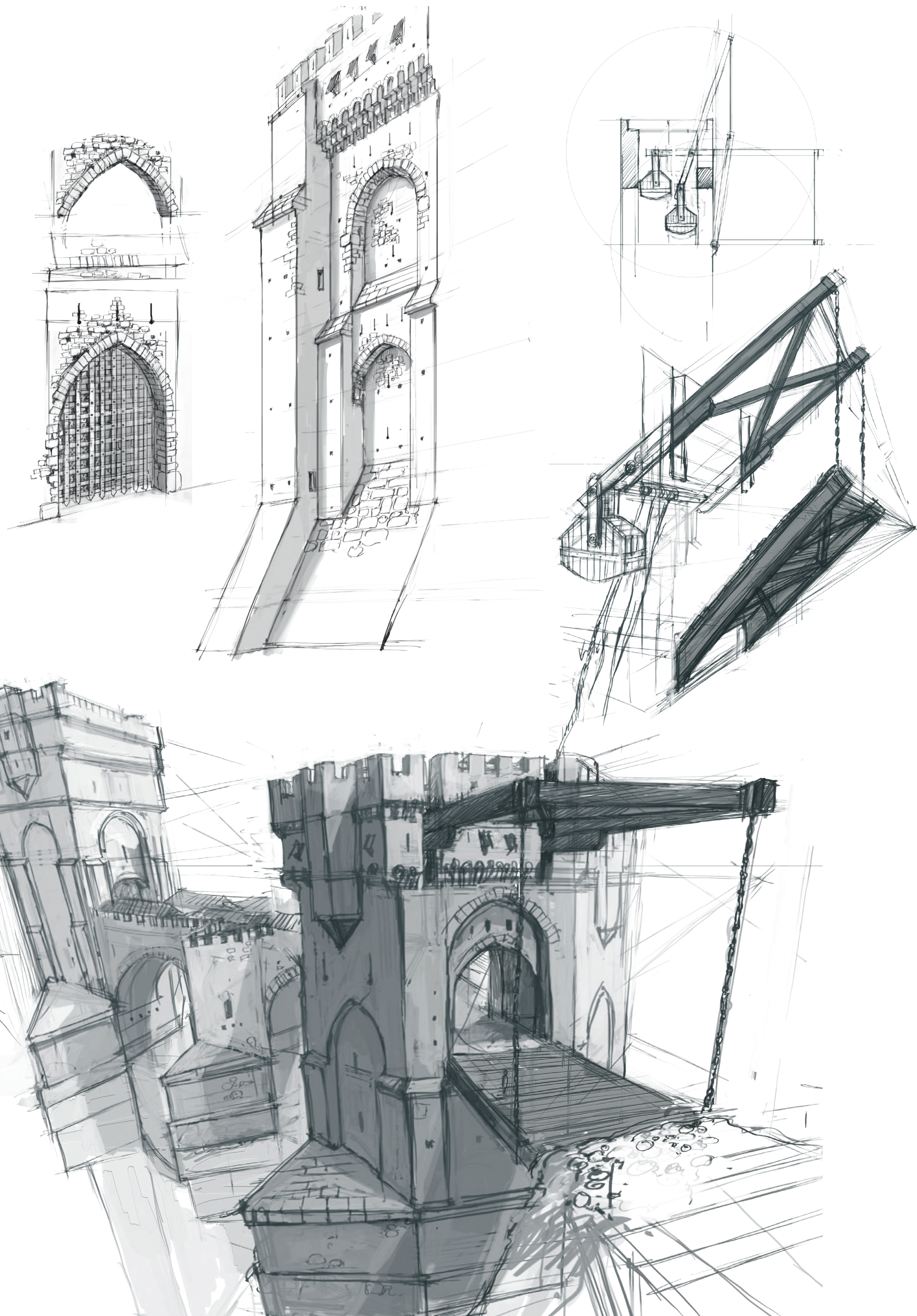


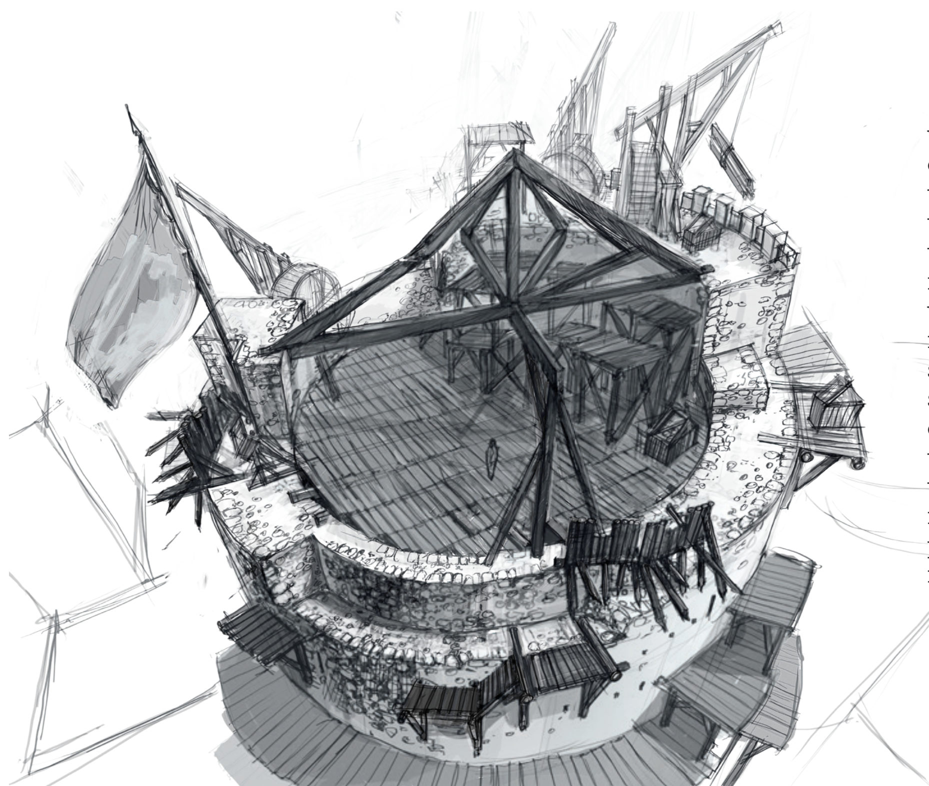




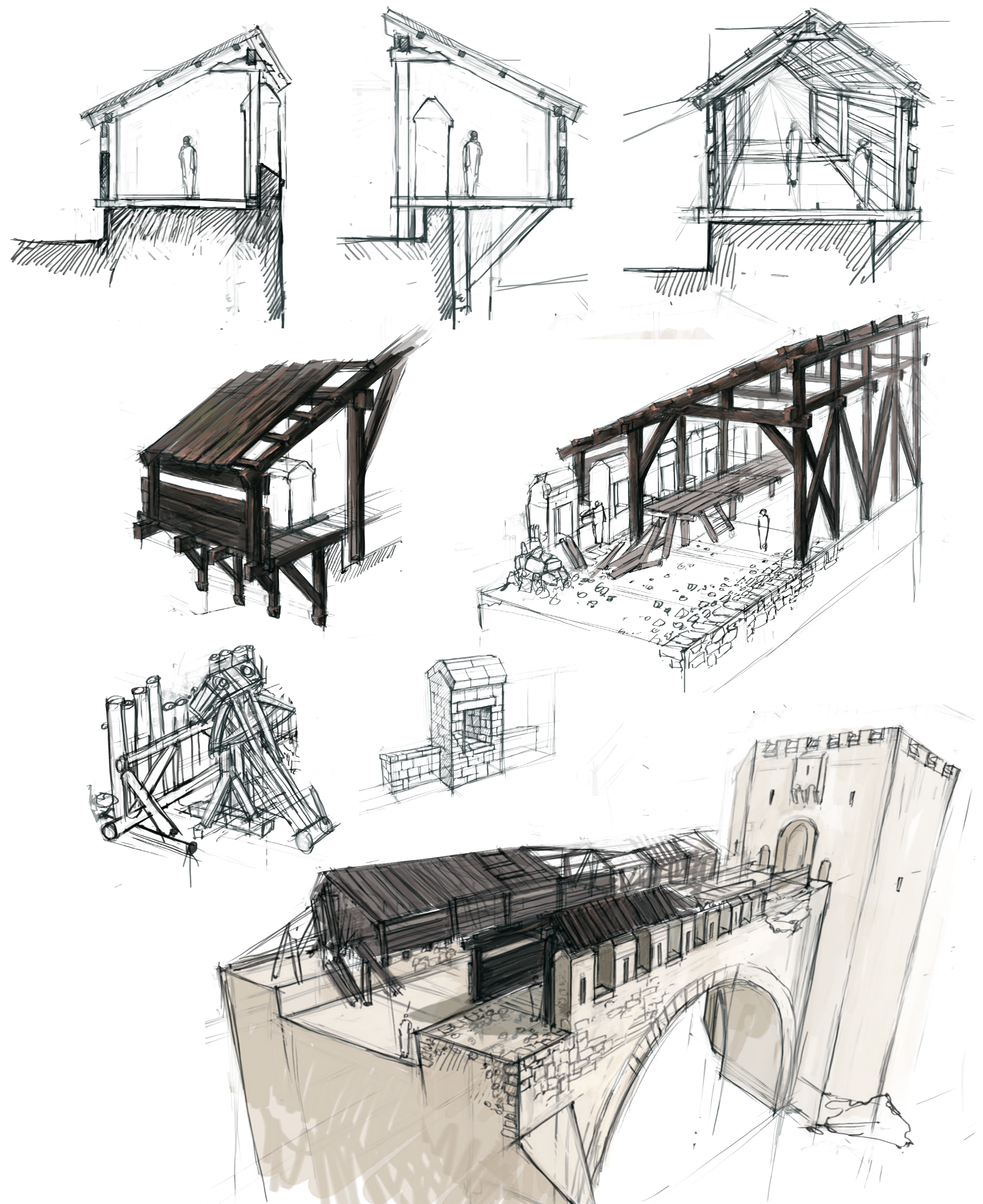
These are the sketches of parts of the fortifications. Part of the defenses is under construction, but the roofed battlements and barbicans defending the bridges and inner courtyards are points of strong resistance, delaying the attackers' advance.







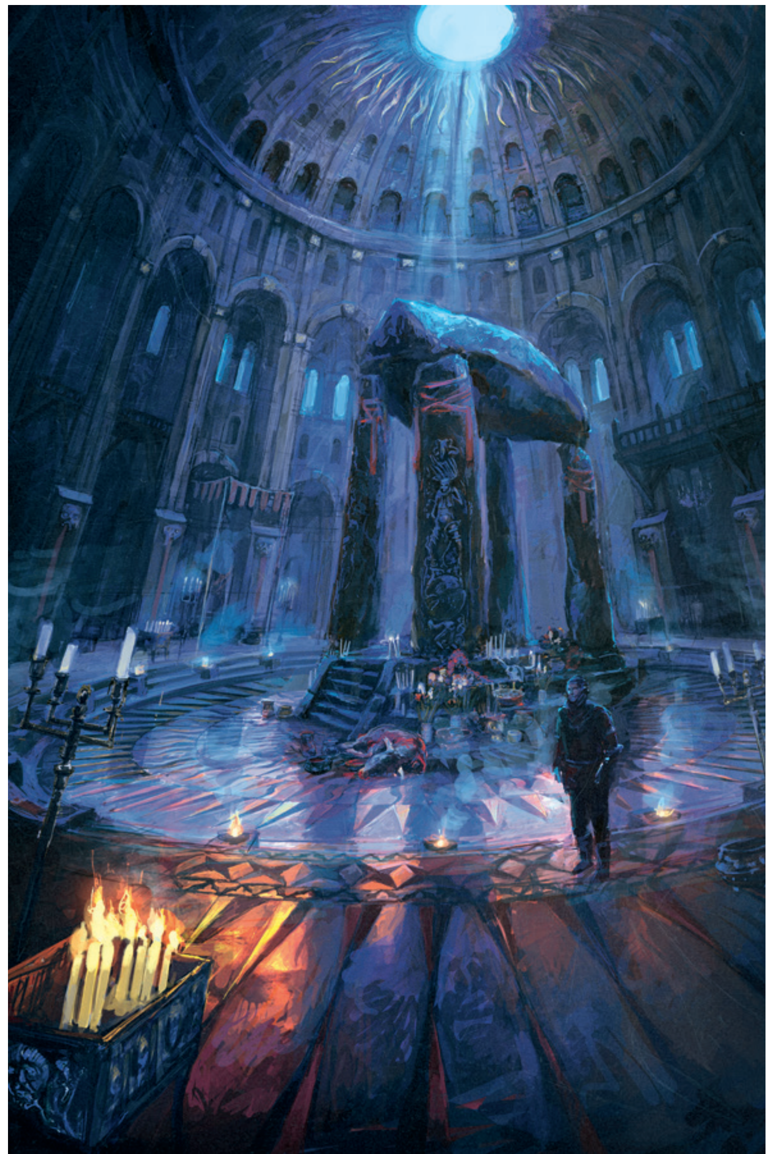
The incomplete tower will become the scene of a fierce battle once the witcher reaches the top by climbing the wooden scaffolding. The drawings show various stages of creating this fragment of the structure. You can see sketches of other parts of the fortifications on the next page, among them the wooden hoarding - roofed galleries that protect the defenders from enemy fire.





When designing the temple, we wanted to avoid any specific architectonic styles of historical religious buildings. Therefore we decided to mix several, creating our own original style. Hence the combination of a Gothic portal with massive Romanesque towers and such elements as obelisks and cromlechs.

The drawing shows the design for the main altar of the local deity. This object is definitely older than the temple walls which surround it. It was most probably here even before the fortress was built. That's how the temples of pagan deities might have looked like if their religions were still developing in late Middle Ages and benefited from contemporary architectural thought. The final version, visible on the next page, is slightly different from the one on this illustration.





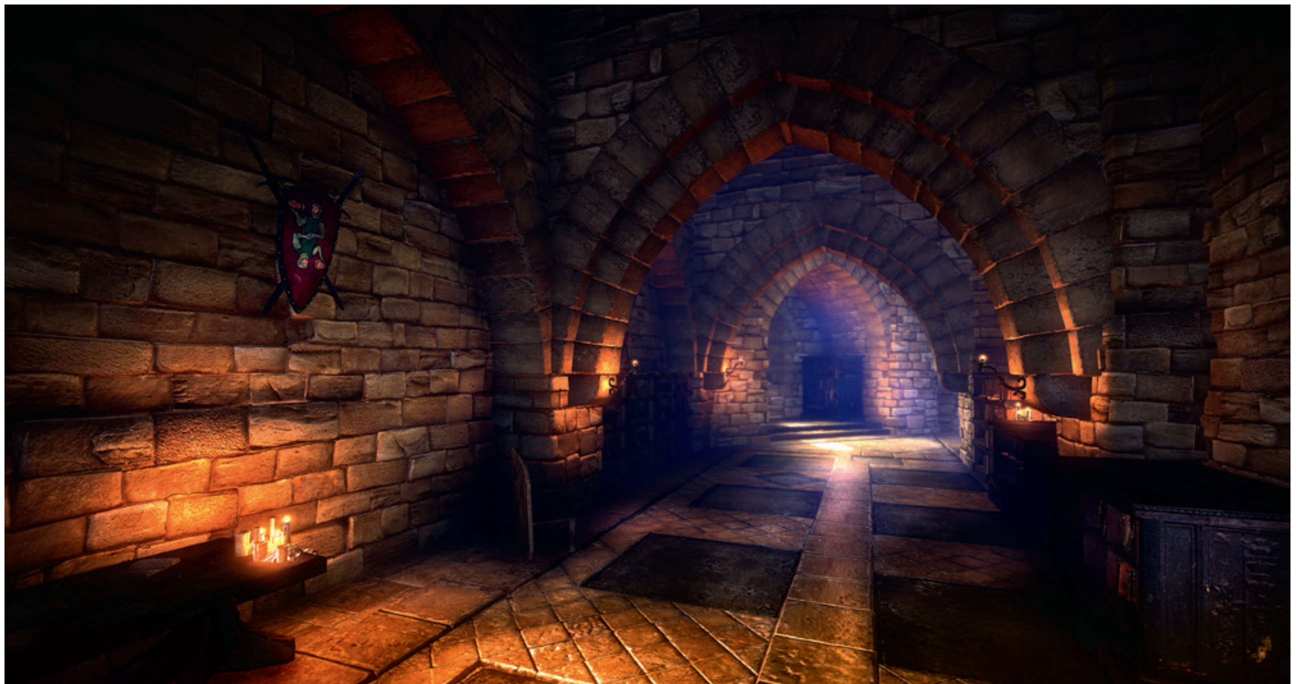




The stained glass and painting aesthetics are based on Gothic art, though the figures present there likely represent beings from the local folklore. We didn't have any specific cult from Sapkowski's novels in mind. Due to the circumstances in which Geralt finds himself in the temple, he doesn't have a chance to learn the history of the local cult. This enhances the place's mystery immensely.

An isolated tower connected with the castle proper with but a long bridge houses the hermitage of House La Valette. There is a library within its walls, but first and foremost it is a place of contemplation and prayer, a refuge for those who want to escape the fortress' noise. It is here that the prologue will find its culmination – and the game's main story will begin in earnest.





What would be a mighty fortress without its dungeons? They house the torture chamber where insubordinate and refractory prisoners may find themselves. The mere sight of the impressive collection of torture implements is usually enough to loosen their tongues. Those more stubborn will quickly find themselves more acquainted with the interior than they'd like to be. After the seat of the La Valettes was taken, this place became the prison of its previous owners, and for Geralt accused of slaying the king.

Hundreds of yards of corridors stretch beneath Castle La Valette, leading to cells and cellars. The drawing below shows a part of the dungeon. The arched ceilings and stone walls are lit by lanterns and torches. Iron bars block the exit from cells. The ever-present damp, caused by the river's proximity, gathers in stone gutters placed in the corridors' floors. The room's corners are full of rotten straw. Not many of those who end up here will enjoy their freedom once more.







ACT I



Two grunts stood guard at the top of the leaning observation tower, their crossbows prepared to fire. Six peasant carts and two merchant wagons stood in the rutted courtyard gashed with hooves, while more than a dozen oxen were stuck in the pen, sadly bending their heads over the mud mixed with dung. [...]
- You could have picked a better time. Or a better area. We're on a war, master witcher. A Scoia'tael band weaves its way through these woods, we fought them as recently as yesterday. I'm waiting for reinforcements here, and then we'll start to comb them out.
- You're fighting elves?
- Not only elves. What, haven't you, a witcher, heard of the Squirrels?

Andrzej Sapkowski, Blood of Elves

Flotsam, the setting of the game's first act, is a trading post on the border of three kingdoms – Temeria, Kaedwen and Aedirn. The walled harbor is a safe haven for punts and cogs transporting goods on this section of the Pontar. Flotsam is an important trading center. River transport flourished ever since guerilla Scoia'tael units became a threat for travelers and merchant caravans.

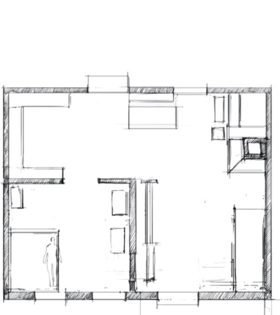
The illustration to the right is an attempt on channeling the place's atmosphere. Designing the location, we wanted to capture the feel of borderlands. Flotsam is far away from civilization, and provides only a semblance of it. Stone houses contrast with the muddy square and less impressive structures. Guards man the towers day and night, watching for anything that could endanger the trading post's inhabitants. The local inn and brothel offer rooms and entertainment for locals and visitors alike.

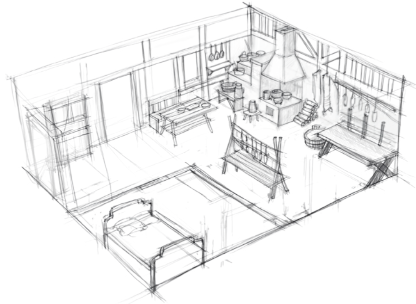


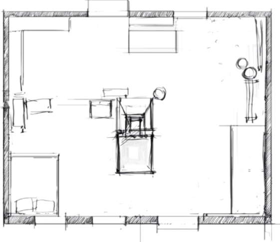


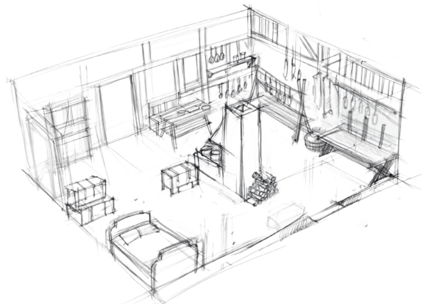


A small cluster of huts comprises the tiny settlement of Lobinden just next to Flotsam. Its inhabitants mainly hail from Aedirn and make their living building and repairing boats. The people, though poor, are open and friendly, also towards nonhumans. That's one of the reasons the village has no walls or even a palisade, as the people need not fear forest Scoia'tael units.



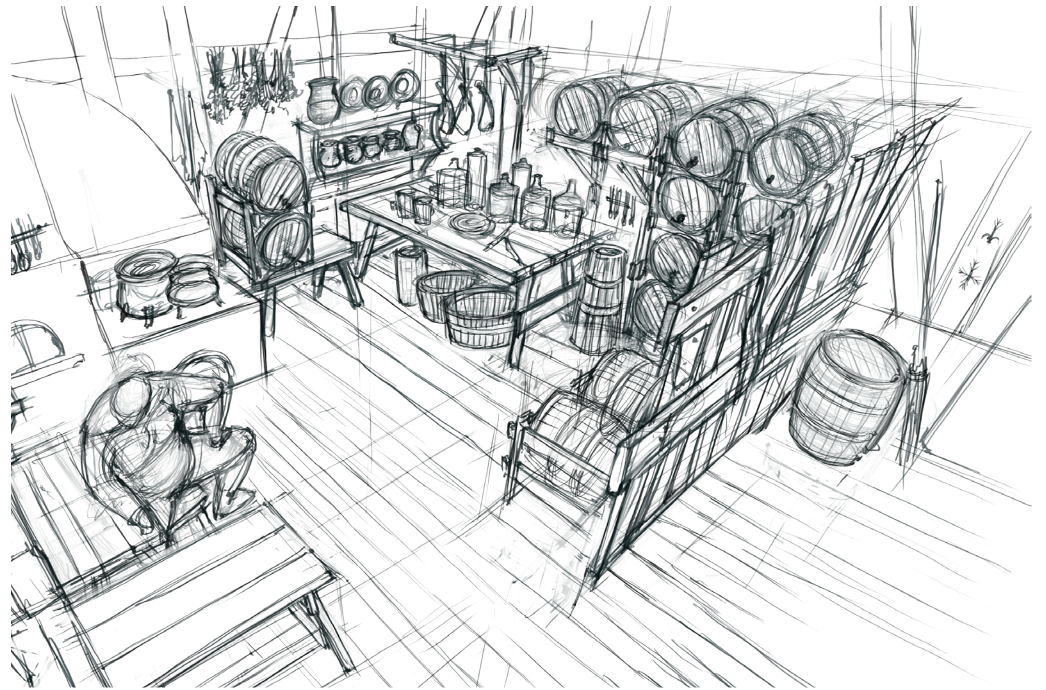










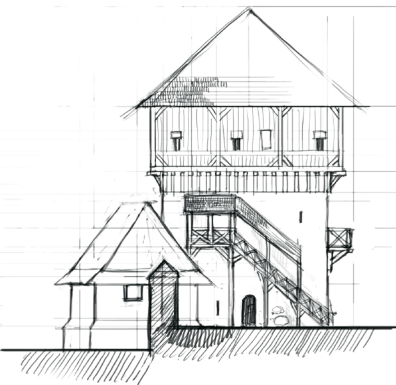


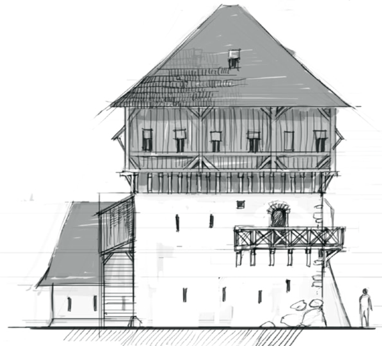
When designing the inn, we wanted to make it look as comfortable and homely as possible. The architecture and interior design – carved wooden ceiling beams, colorful walls and benches standing by them – are based on historical reconstructions of such buildings. The room, filled with furniture, gives off the impression that the building is really lived in. We also couldn't omit such details as mushrooms, herbs and sausages drying under the ceiling.

The black and white sketch above shows the design of the working part of the inn. We wanted it to be functional yet save as much space as possible. This arrangement of items makes it easy for the innkeeper to access anything he needs.



When designing buildings, we always had a logical interior layout in mind. The slaughterhouse was designed both in the form of an interior sketch and in the form of concept art that is visible to the right. Both elements were the basis for further work on its design.









Commander Loredo's mansion was supposed to be the most impressive building in Flotsam. The drawings show successive stages of its development. The structure is definitely defensive, as it was supposed to be the trading post's final stand in the case of an attack. The narrow stairs allow for easier defense of the upper floor door, while the galleries and the balcony are convenient vantage points for both shooting and observation.

The main platform atop the keep is a wide room with a high ceiling. Loredo's quarters can be found here. His men occupy the lower floor. The illustration to the side shows a draft of the commander's chamber.

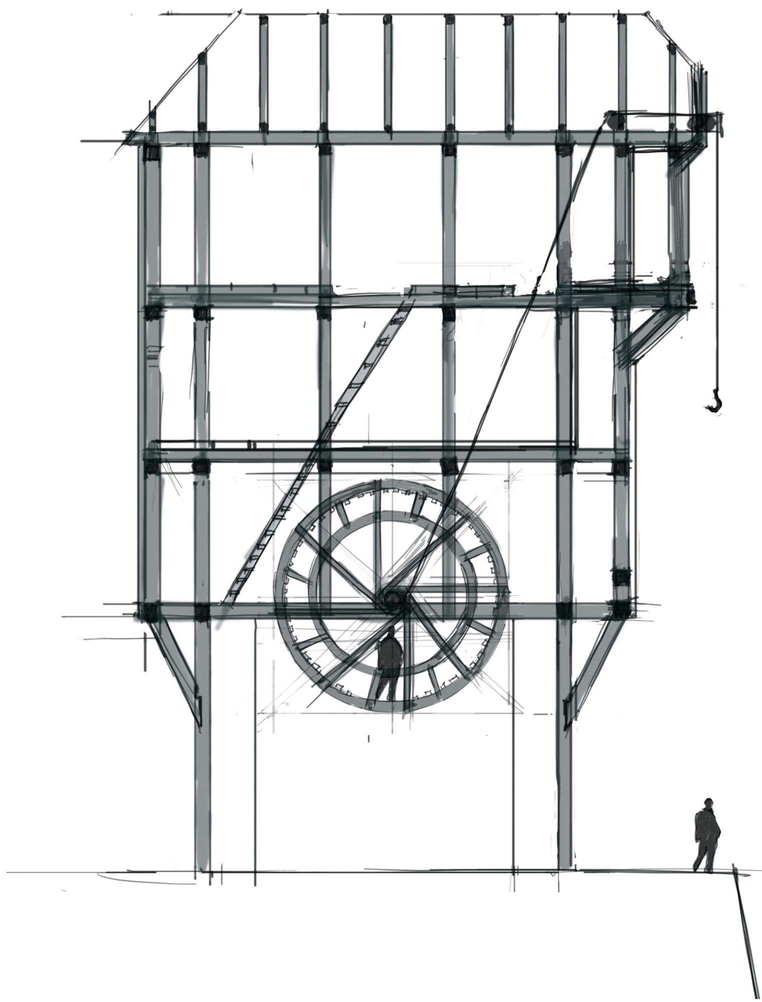


The mansion's basement contains the chambers of Loredo's mother. This insane woman, continuously intoxicated with the drug she distillates, lives in a world of the fears and nightmares from her past. She worships a perverse version of the deity Vaiopatis – the statue seen here is a grotesque alteration of those found in the surrounding woods.









Since river transportation is so important to Flotsam's existence, the design of the port and its structure was very important. Even if some of the buildings wouldn't be available in game, we wanted the location to be designed as realistically as possible. Therefore when working on the wharf and harbor of the trading post, we came up with the idea to make a model of a wooden crane. It was inspired by an analogical structure found in Gdansk. The graphic artists began working on this part of the location by making a sketch showing the crane and its internal construction. Similar cranes were used in the Middle Ages to load and unload goods and during refitting boats and ships.



Having the story take place near a river meant we had to design floating vessels. That's how Vernon Roche's sailing ship and the prison barge moored at the Flotsam harbor came to be.

The barge is a floating prison for captured Scoia'tael. It's larger and more massive than the Blue Stripes' vessel, and its hold contains cells where prisoners are kept – not in a comfortable condition at all. Its design was to stress the ill fame that the boat has, so we wanted to polish any details that could strengthen the effect as best as we could. The black sail with a faded lily, iron cages for the prisoners and a "dance macabre" painted on the sides paint a bleak painting of Temerian justice.





The drawing to the left depicts the model that was the basis for the design of Vernon Roche's ship. The Special Forces have a small, maneuverable river vessel – an equivalent of a modern patrol boat. Unlike the square rigged prison barge, this ship has lateen sails, allowing it to sail against the wind more easily. Its smaller draft allows it to safely traverse the Pontar's shallows. A distinctive blue-white striped sail with the Temerian crest was added to the vessel's final in-game design.

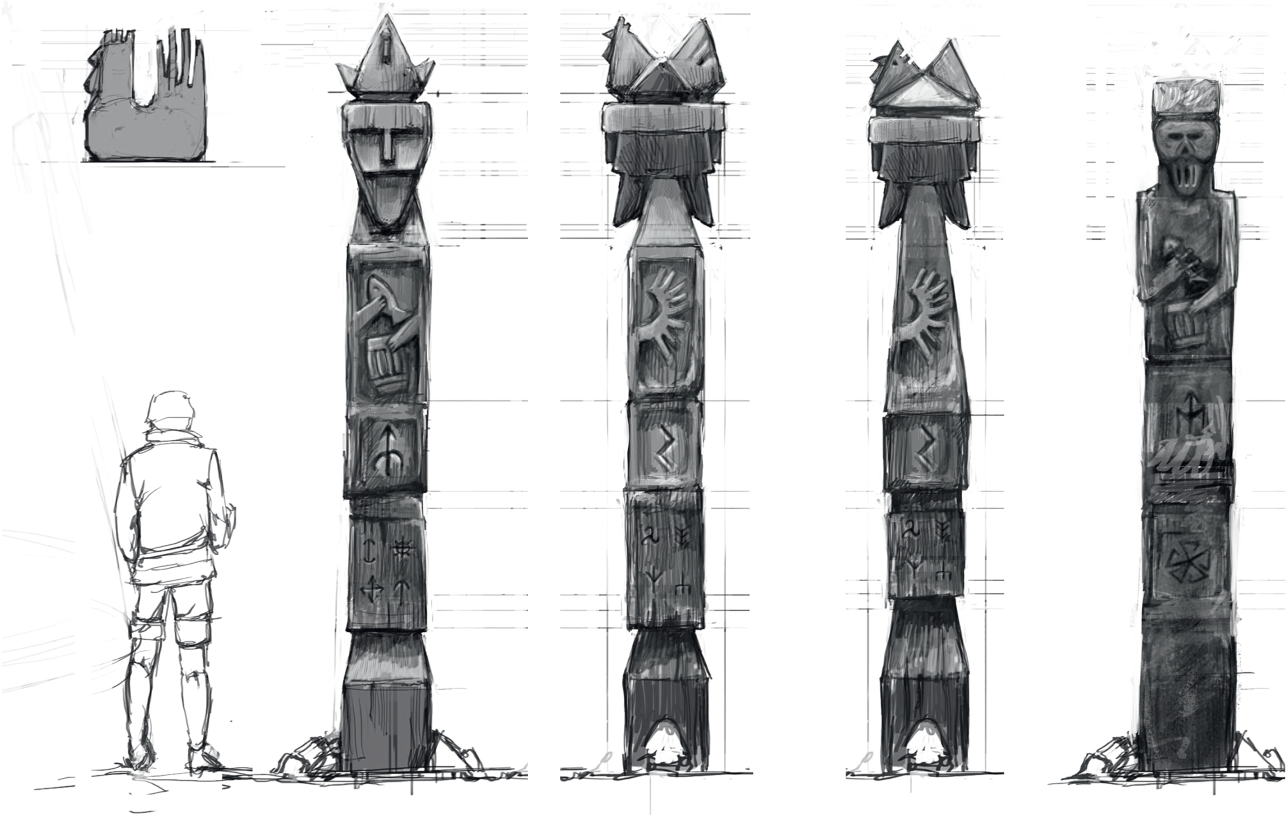


The trading post of Flotsam lies in the heart of wild, maiden territory. An ancient forest – where man is but an intruder - begins just beyond its walls. Only a few steps are enough to leave civilization behind and become steeped in the wood's green shadow.

The illustration above perfectly presents the climate we wanted for our forest locations. The forest is thick, with trees growing close to each other, and almost approaches the settlement, towering above its walls. The narrow strip of land not covered in vegetation is a border that must be renewed almost every day. The trading post exists solely due to the efforts of its inhabitants. Had the humans stopped rooting the trees out, the forest would quickly regain the territories it lost to them.



We wanted the forest to be a mysterious place, dangerous and somewhat unreal. The atmosphere within was to be overwhelming. We achieved that by warping the scale of the area. Tree trunks, mushrooms and ferns are huge, the light rarely pierces the treetops and tiny human forms are alien and out of place here. The concept drawing and the frame from the game show the idea and its implementation.



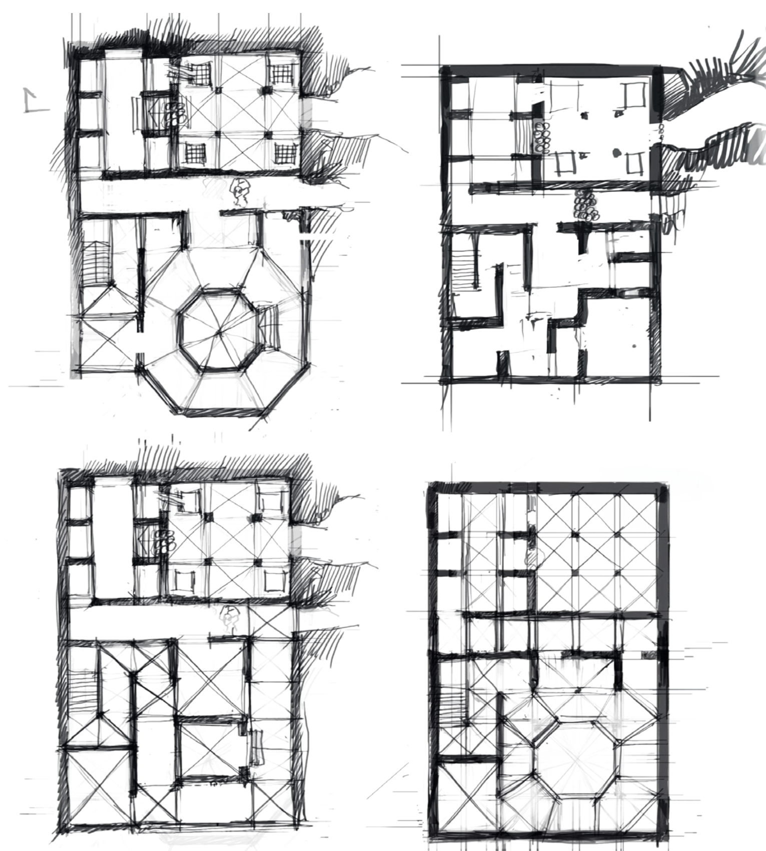


The forest hides many mysteries. The origin of the stone statues dotting the landscape here and there is one of them. Adding them to the surroundings magnifies the wood's unsettling atmosphere. Time had its effect on those sculptures covered in moss, and they seem to be watching those passing by. Travelers sometimes use them as landmarks, but their original meaning and function were completely different. For the altar of a local deity, Vaiopatis, is hidden in the forest wilderness. He is the protector of life and fertility, but also the harbinger of death. Not many know of his existence, and even fewer worship him, brining humble offerings here. The statues are also tied to this ancient religion of the first inhabitants of these lands.

The sketches below show one of the earlier compositions of shapes and forms of the stone statues. They're based on the existing remains of pagan cultures – among them the so called "Zbruch Idol", a stone statue of Svantevid dated between 9th and 10th century CE. Vaiopatis himself was inspired by an authentic Prussian-Lithuanian deity worshipped in early Middle Ages. His attributes, including a barrel and a fish, are visible on the statues.



The abandoned ruins of a mental hospital that stood here years ago are another mysterious place in the forest. The gloomy dungeon that held the cells of the more burden-some “guests” are the best preserved section. Stone walls and iron bars bear witness to the terrifying events that have transpired here.



The sketches show various projects of arranging the location's rooms.

Below is an initial drawing of the ruins visible from the forest. Note that though it's somewhat conventional, the illustration excellently shows the location's atmosphere. It was a good basis for our work on detailing the place.

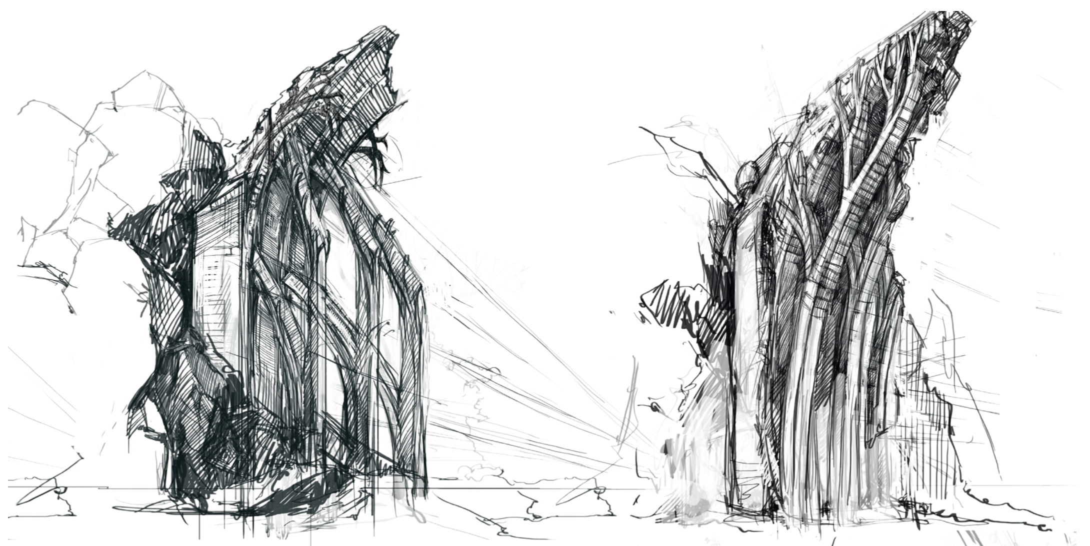
ACT I | THE KAYRAN'S LAIR

The Kayran – a terrible aquatic beast prowling this section of the river – is one of Geralt's main opponents in this Act. The creature, called the Old Man by the locals, has it's lair near Lobinden. The illustration to the right depicts an artistic vision of the location of our hero's future battle with the monster. Here we can see the Kayran's lair while its "owner" is absent. It looks calm and as if abandoned, but there are trails of the monster's presence everywhere. The local vegetation is destroyed and a keen eye will notice the spot where the Old Man tends to drag its body out of the water in the shallows to the right.

During the battle, the Kayran spits green, sticky slime. A thick layer of the same excretion covers the vicinity of its lair. The remains of its last meal – bloated, uneaten remains that the creature disregarded or left for later - can be seen too.



The stone pillars are the ruins of an ancient elven bridge. Not much of this once impressive structure is still standing. The sketches to the right illustrate the initial work on this element of the scenery.



ACT II



We's passin' th' border to give protection to th' folk of Upper Aedirn... Wait, it's not that... Not of Aedirn, but of Lormark. That's what 'is lordship th' margrave Mansfeld said. Yes and rightly, 'e said: Demavend was defeated, 'e slipped and is now on th' ground, for 'e was a bad ruler and his politics was shit. And 'e's done for, as is all of Aedirn. Our king lent Demavend allota coin, for 'e aided 'im, all them riches cannot go to waste, tis' time to reccuver the coin with interest. [...] For tis' our ancestral land, Lormark. Once them lands were under Kaedweni rule and nowdays will come back to that rule. Till th' river Dyfne.

Andrzej Sapkowski, Time of Disdain



The location of the game's second act greatly depends on the player's choices in the first act. Depending on these, Geralt may end up in king Henselt's military camp or in the dwarven town of Vergen. Though one will be able to visit the other location during this act, the main part of the story will play out in one of the aforementioned locations depending on your choices.

The Kaedweni camp is tied to Vernon Roche's story. Following him, Geralt will end up in the middle of war preparations at the Kaedweni-Aedirnian border. The illustrations shown here depict various stages of designing this location – from initial concept sketches through more detailed drawings showing the camp's atmosphere, to the final effect.

As we were working on this part of the game, we wanted to emphasize the realism of the fortification and soldiers' quarters, as well as details like the soldiers' armament or their living conditions. The camp was supposed to be muddy and dirty, as befits a large gathering of people. The effect is magnified by the less-than-pleasant weather. The low clouds and soggy ground suggest that frequent rain pesters the inhabitants.





Initial drawings had happier colors, and the camp itself was more colorful. It was changed, however, to better fit the reality of medieval military camps.



The chances of mistaking the tents of Kaedweni nobility with those of rank-and-file soldiers are slim. High and spacious, they allow the knights living there to enjoy their comforts. The grandest tent belongs to the king himself. The illustration depicts an extensive interior, a wide, four-poster bed, and a table with high chairs sporting ornate headrests. The floor is covered in carpets and animal skins. The term "royal splendor" is quite appropriate here.

This black and white sketch depicts the interior of Vernon Roche's tent. The atmosphere shows the stark contrast between it and other officers' tents in Henselt's camp. Here comforts are reduced to a bare minimum. The weapon racks and maps on the walls make it more of an armory or briefing room.







The tent of the prostitutes following the Kaedweni army is also distinct from the others, but in a different way. The mobile whorehouse is predominantly carmine and frills, with draperies and lanterns stressing its role.

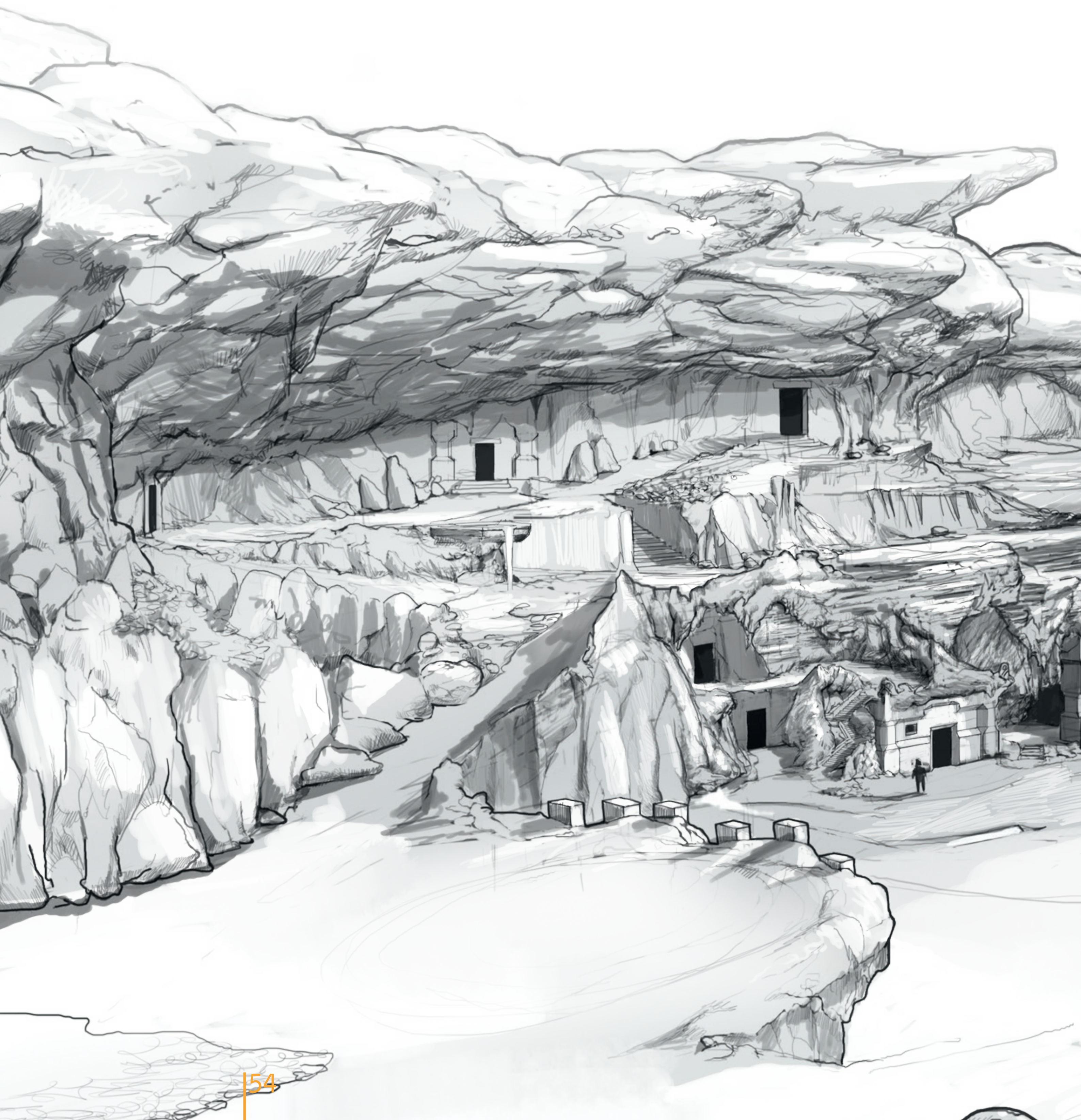
The interior is also different from that of other quarters. A simple soldier entering it is under the impression of entering another world, leaving the dirty and grey reality of the military camp behind.





Choosing Iorveth as an ally will lead Geralt to Vergen – a town that grew near a dwarven mine. Located among rocky gullies, hewn directly in their walls, it is an amazing example of this race's architectural thought. The concept sketch below displays the town's early design. Some elements, such as the huge stone atlas supporting parts of an old structure, were not brought into the game word, but the drawing still presents the atmosphere that the location designers wanted to achieve.

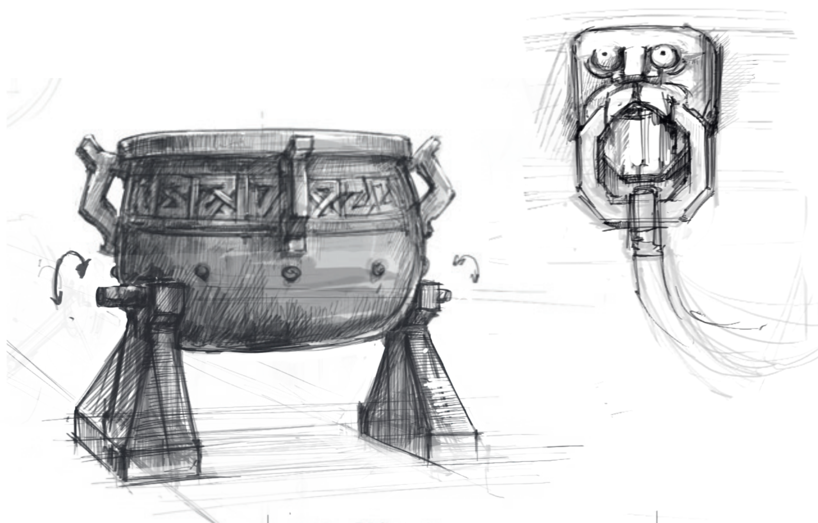
Comparing the proportions with the tiny figure on the illustration shows you the scale of the buildings. In its heyday, the place was vibrant with life, but time took its toll on the settlement and only recent events made the name of Vergen widely recognizable again.





The main gate is an important part of the town's fortifications. Like nearly all buildings in Vergen, it was built from solid stone blocks. Though the settlement was not founded as a military outpost, its inhabitants didn't neglect safety measures. Even if the gate fell, prospective invaders would have to cross a long stretch of street, attacked by the defenders' fire from above. The stone alley could turn into a deadly trap, once the boiling oil from huge cauldrons is loosed upon the invaders. The sketches below depict the design of these mechanisms.





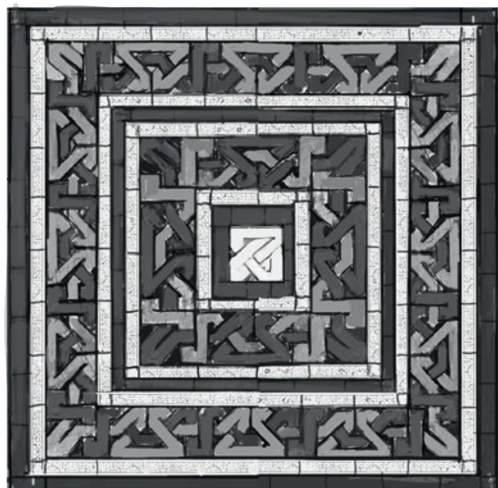








The illustration depicts a Vergen interior – a type of an antechamber connecting several corridors. The chamber has a high ceiling and is well lit due to the wide windows. Though it's not a representational building, the tall walls are richly ornamented – the floor, frames and even stone ledges of the supporting structure are adorned with distinctive wicker-work. We assumed that dwarves build things be huge in scope, but they still don't neglect aesthetic qualities. Their style is heavily geometric, as seen in both architecture and ornamentation, and presented on the illustrations in this chapter.





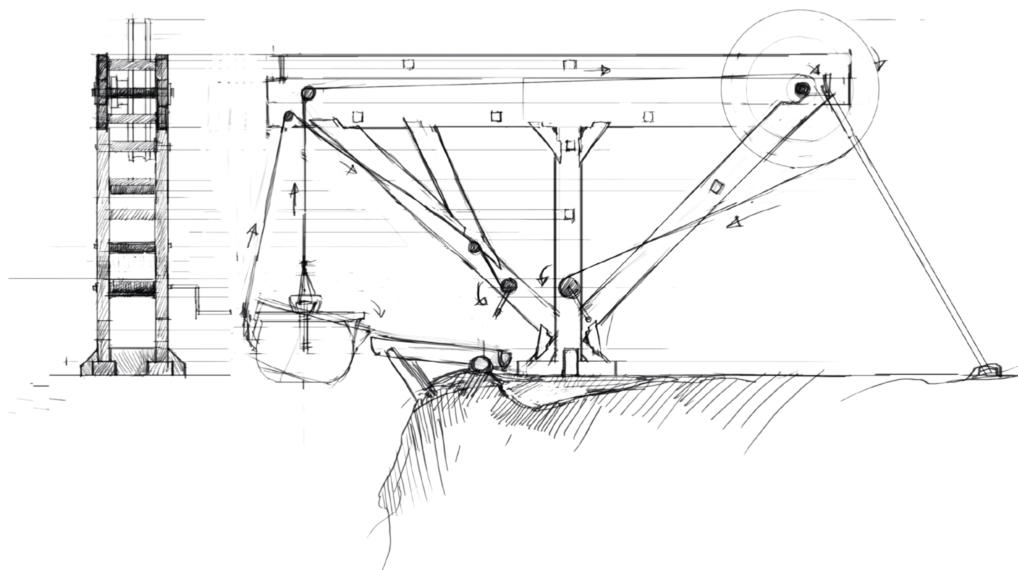
The illustration depicts the design of a chamber adapted for the use of the young heir to the Aedirnian throne, Stennis. The prince is a visitor here, so the accommodation was prepared in accordance with dwarven standards. Massive, heavy furniture, a wrought chandelier and a brass brazier fit the typically dwarven wall and floor ornaments. The figurine of a dwarven woman standing by the fireplace is also an interesting decorative motif. We can see its sketches above.



Most buildings in town were cut in the valley's rocky face. Only the finished building fronts and massive supportive columns suggest that the stone walls may hide spacious, comfortable chambers.

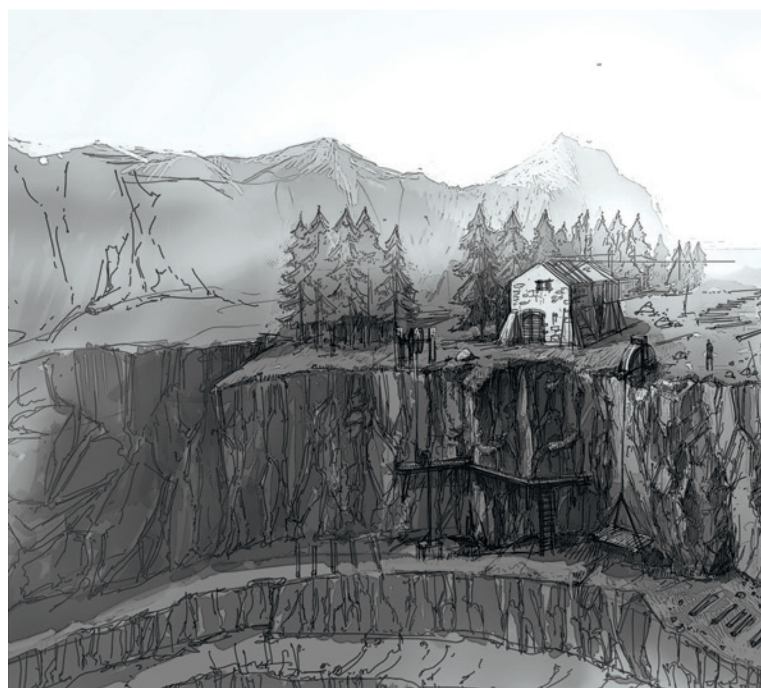
Dwarves have always had a knack for technical solutions. That's why our graphic artists made sure that the wooden crane they designed was actually operational. The system of gears and capstans reduces the strength required to lift necessary weights. You can see the completed sketch on the neighboring page. It's worth noting that the dwarves carefully decorate even everyday items. Even the heads of spindles and rivets are meticulously engraved. The color illustration depicts the structures in-game appearance.







The area of Vergen is an empty mountainous region, where it's easier to find an aggressive troll than friendly travelers. The labyrinth of rocky gullies is not the safest place to stroll alone. To further diversify the landscape and stress the atmosphere of this secluded place, we decided to add an abandoned dwarven quarry there. The illustrations depict the initial design of this location. Initially, a ruined stone storehouse housing mining equipment was to stand at the edge of the excavation. The unused building eroded in time, and the departing workers could not be bothered to take all tools with them. The area recently became the hunting ground for the harpies that nest in a cave at the excavation's bottom.





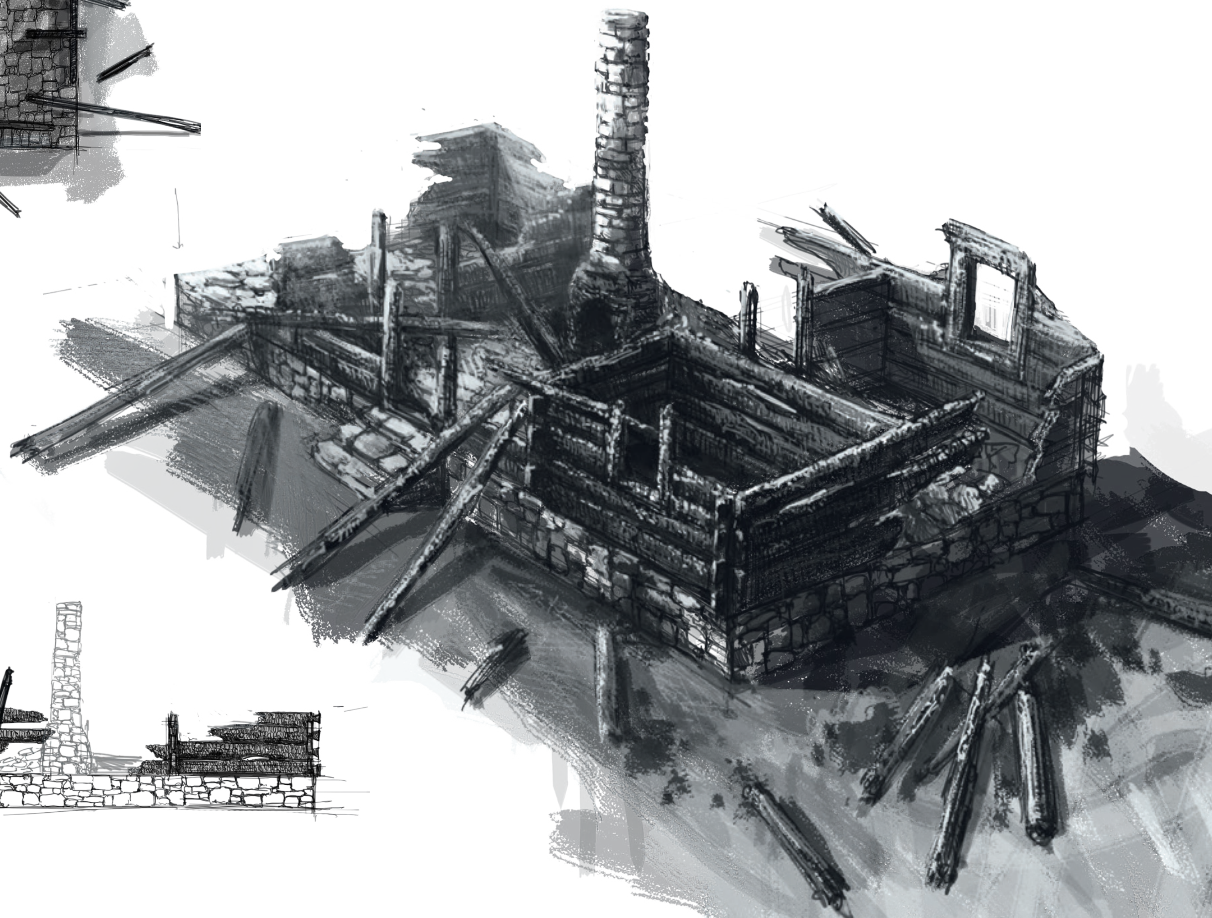


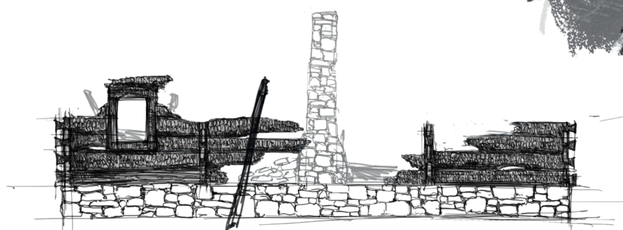
There's a stretch of no-man's land between Vergen and Henselt's camp. Designing it, we were wondering how would the area battled over for years by the armies of two neighboring kingdoms look like. The ruins of an old Aedirnian guard tower were the result. The crumbling tower is proof that these lands knew no peace for a long time.





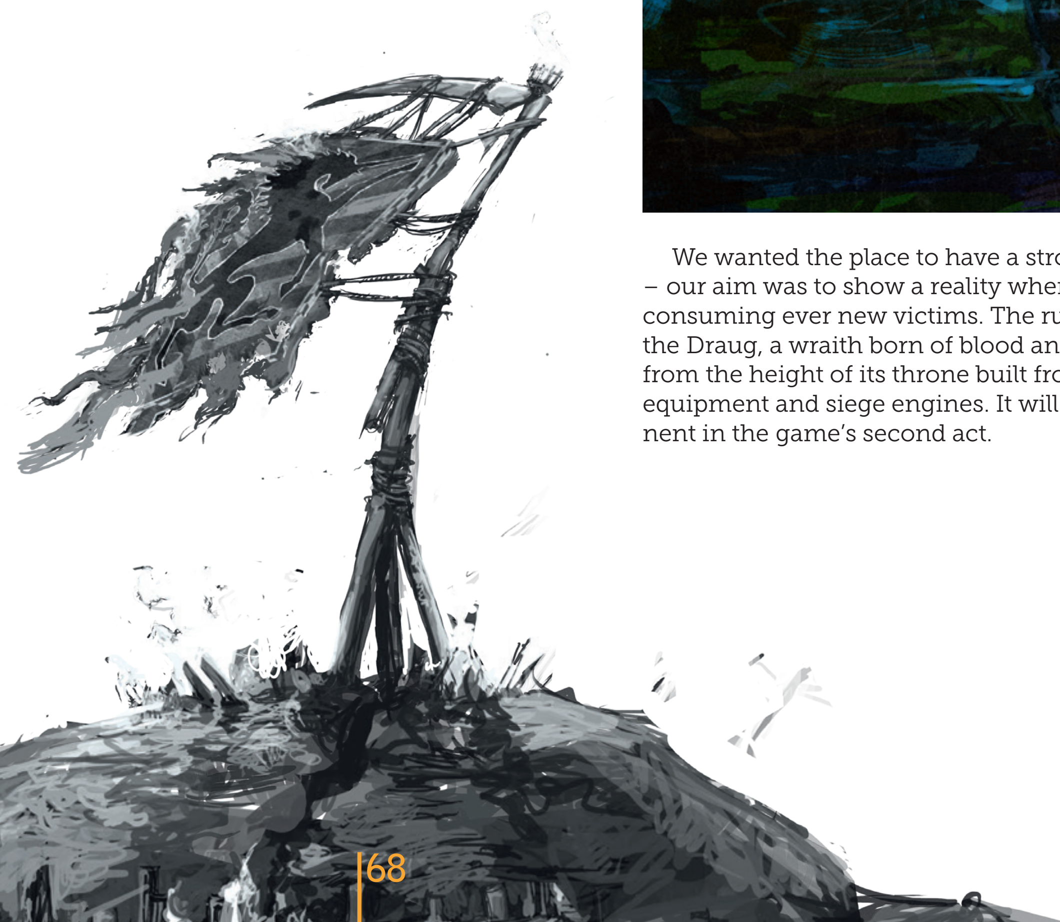
The remains of a burnt village near the road to Vergen are another proof. The burnt out ruins of wooden huts show the fate that likely befell many other, smaller settlements in these lands. The stone foundations and a still standing chimney are almost all that is left of this farmyard. This inconspicuous location helped us to build the atmosphere of ravaged borderlands.





The curse is one of main themes of the game's second act, and one of the main quests that our hero will have to complete. To the right we can see a drawing that was an important inspiration to the creators of this part of the story. The old battlefield is covered by a magical mist. The world on its other side is a land right from the nightmare of a veteran of the last battle fought in these lands. Hosts of spectral soldiers clash in an eternal battle here, while wraiths born of evil will and suffering hunt the living who wandered into their domain.

We wanted the place to have a strong effect on gamers – our aim was to show a reality where war reigns supreme, consuming ever new victims. The ruler of this world is the Draug, a wraith born of blood and violence. It rules from the height of its throne built from the remnants of equipment and siege engines. It will be Geralt's main opponent in the game's second act.





ACT III



- Here – the witcher glanced at the sorcerer – a battle scene would be in order. Just scant few years after Monck's successful expedition, the troops of marshal Raupenneck of Tretogor slaughtered Loc Muinne and Est Haemlet, killing all elves, without regard to age or gender. Beginning the war which ended with the Shaerrawedd massacre.

Andrzej Sapkowski, Time of Disdain



Following the trails of the mysterious kingslayer, Geralt reaches the ancient city of Loc Muinne. The process of creating this location of was one of our most complex tasks. The work resulted in the remnants of one of the oldest metropolis' in that universe. If stones could speak, the ruins of Loc Muinne would tell many stories. The slaughter of the elves – its former owners – is a tragic but small section of the city's history.





The Nilfgaardian camp was set up in one of Loc Muinne's districts. The Emperor's emissaries were officially invited here by king Henselt of Kaedwen to take part in the historic event that the restoration of the Council and Conclave of Sorcerers will be. When making the concept sketch, our artists tried to keep in mind the actual ways of adapting a square in a ruined city for the purpose of a temporary encampment.

The solders' tents are set up in a tight order near the walls of ancient mansions. In the distance, the roof of the officers' pavilion, which is stretched between two walls of ruined buildings, can be seen. Banners with the image of the sun – Nilfgaard's coat of arms – leave no doubts as to whose camp it is.







The delegation of the Kingdom of Redania also made camp in one of the city's districts. Standards with the Redanian eagle proudly fly over this section of Loc Muinne. Young king Radovid has very specific plans regarding his stay at the coming summit. Knights of the Order of the Flaming Rose came with him to the debate. They're a force to be reckoned with.

It's worth noting that the initial sketch of the Redanian camp depicts an entirely different system and order than the one used by the Nilfgaardians. The tents here aren't place separately in orderly rows, and most were not put up using parts of the ruins. This combination underlines the different character of two different cultures.







Some of the buildings in Loc Muinne were built by the elves. Their construction and appearance are based on the classical style of Greek and Roman architecture. A huge amphitheatre is one of the more important locations in the city. This ancient building becomes the main arena for the events that will shape the future fate of that world.

When we discussed how the location of the Loc Muinne debate could look like, we had this idea almost immediately. The semicircular arena surrounded by rows of stone benches is the ideal setting for the culmination planned for the game's final Act.







PLACEABLES



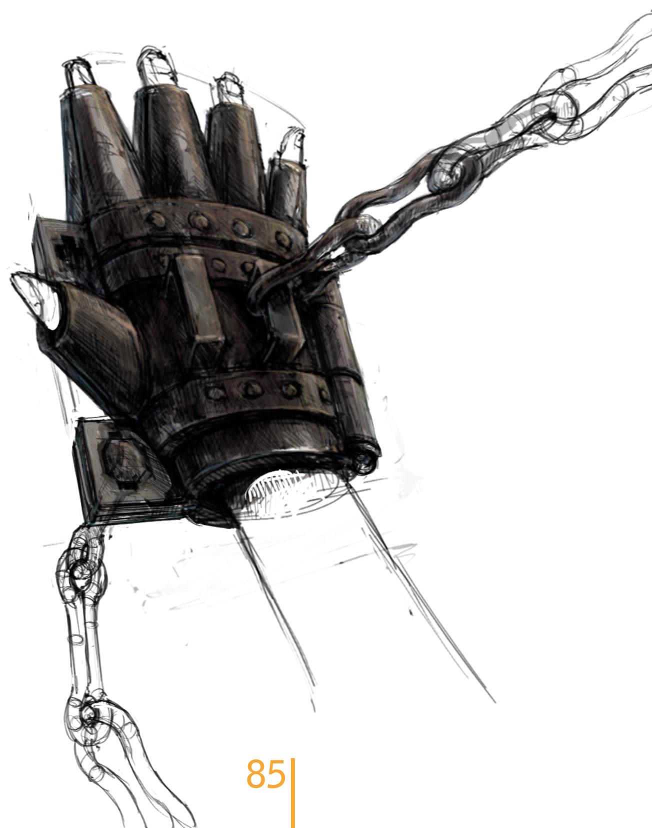
The most visible element of the laboratory was the amount of books – they used up the most space in this spacious room. Bulky tomes filled and strained bookshelves by the walls, piled up on chests and commodes. They must have, by the witcher's estimates, cost a fortune. All of the other, traditional, decorative elements were accounted for – a stuffed crocodile, a dried-up porcupine fish hanging from the ceiling, a dusty skeleton and a huge collection of jars with alcohol, surely containing all imaginable filth – centipedes, spiders, snakes, toads and countless human and nonhuman fragments, mainly entrails. There was even a homunculus there, or at least something resembling a homunculus, but could as well have been a smoke-dried newborn.

Andrzej Sapkowski, A Shard of Ice

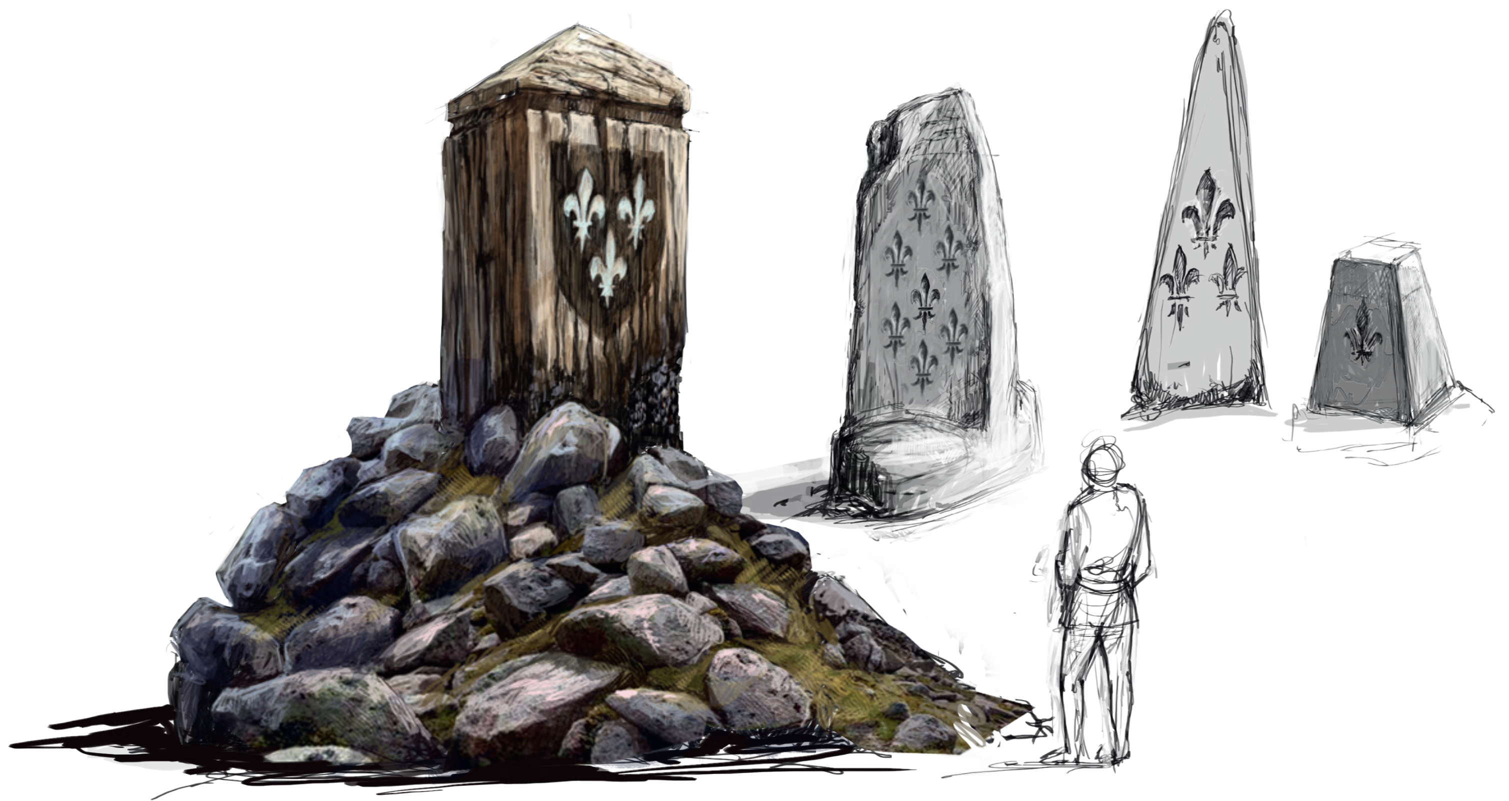


Placeables are elements used as location decorations in-game. Too big to be picked up, they're immobile props. Stalls, wagons, tables, statues, tubs, beds, lanterns, fences, obelisks – all of them fit into this category. We present only part of the hundreds created for the game on the following pages.



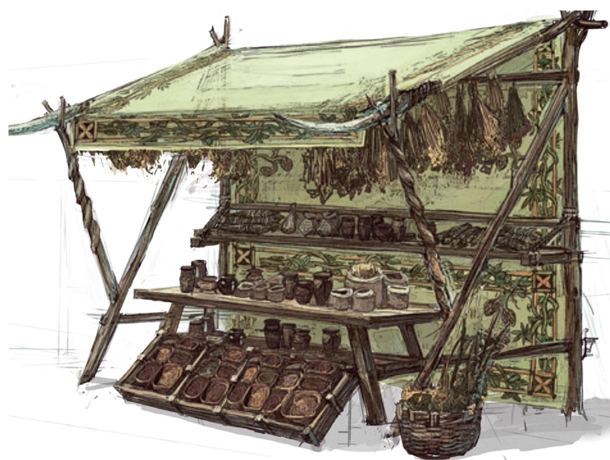























CHARACTERS



The stranger reached for the cut in his jacket again, and produced a round medallion on a silver chain. A wolf's head with bared fangs was depicted on the medallion.
– You have a name? You can give any, I'm not curious, it'll make talking easier.
– My name is Geralt.
– Geralt will do. Of Rivia, as I presume by your diction?
– Of Rivia.

Andrzej Sapkowski, The Witcher

Geralt of Rivia

Creating Geralt's character for The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings was a challenge as difficult as it was for the first game, though for slightly different reasons. We were designing him from the scratch back then, and we had to rise up to the expectations of fans of the novels. Now, however, our graphic artists faced a new challenge – designing the main character's appearance using the new graphical engine and all of its new possibilities.

Work on the witcher's appearance had to be done from scratch. Geralt's face from the previous game was our basis. His new appearance was to be linked to the original, but would also use the full potential of the new engine.

Certain physical traits of a person can reflect that person's personality. With a distinctive nose and forehead curvature, as well as the mouth and chin arrangement, we managed to give Geralt a certain predatory look. Things inseparably associated with the witcher's appearance, such as the scar on his face or yellow eyes with cat pupils were obviously retained, though Geralt now sports a new haircut. The tied hare is more practical, since it won't get in the way in combat.

In several scenes we also have the chance to admire the scars covering Geralt's body. It's obvious at first sight that our hero has experienced a lot, and his profession is not the safest one.







During his journey, Geralt will have a chance to wear various armors. He'll be able to buy, loot, or craft some of them, often using quite exotic materials in the last case. When designing them, we focused on realism and functionality. Buckles have their role of fastening and supporting equipment. The wolf's head amulet, the mark of the witchers' guild, is worn in a visible place. We decided on the radical step of placing the sword hilts on the same side of Geralt's head.



The asymmetry adds dynamism to Geralt's profile, and it eliminates the problem of animations looking ridiculous with the character drawing a weapon over his own left shoulder.



Thanks to our graphic artists' hard work, about thirty different sets of armor, differing in both appearance and statistics, were created. Most of them are strictly tied to phases of the story and the factions the witcher decides to cooperate with. This way, the hero's appearance will depend on the player's decisions and accomplishments. The following pages contain a composition of armor elements available to the witcher.



1. LEATHER JACKET
2. STUDDED LEATHER JACKET
3. QUALITY LEATHER JACKET
4. ELVEN ARMOR
5. AEDERNIAN LEATHER JACKET
6. HEAVY LEATHER JACKET
7. KAEDWENI LEATHER JACKER
8. ASTROGARUS' ARMOR
9. QUILTED JACKET
10. SHIADHAL'S ARMOR


1
2
5
6
7



1. LIGHT LEATHER JACKET
2. ARMOR OF VICOVARO
3. THYSSEN LEATHER
4. SHIADHAL'S ARMOR
5. QUILTED ARMOR
6. ARMOR OFMAHAKAM
7. ARMOR OFMAHAKAM
8. SOLID LEATHER JACKET
9. RAVEN ARMOR
10. HEAVY ELVEN ARMOR


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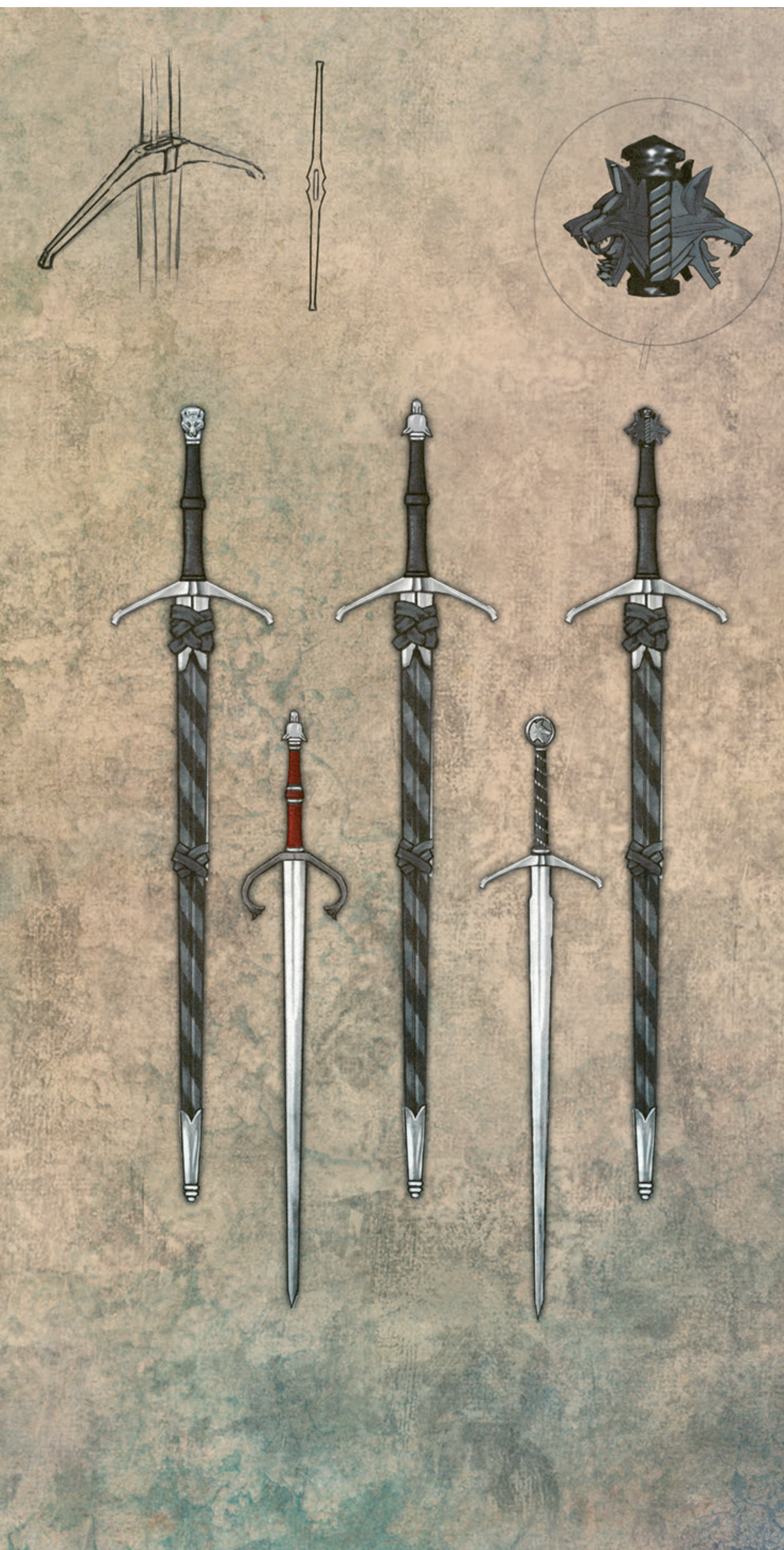


1. DRAUG ARMOR
2. ARMOR OF TIR
3. MAGICIAN'S ARMOR
4. SORCERER'S JACKET
5. BLUE STRIPES' JACKET
6. KAEDWENI LETHER ARMOR
7. ARMOR YSGITH
8. ARMOR OF YS
9. DREARG RUADHRI
10. ARMOR OF BAN ARD

STEEL SWORDS

The witcher's steel swords are designed to be "weapons for humans". Our hero will have a chance to use several dozen various types in-game. We present several chosen models here.



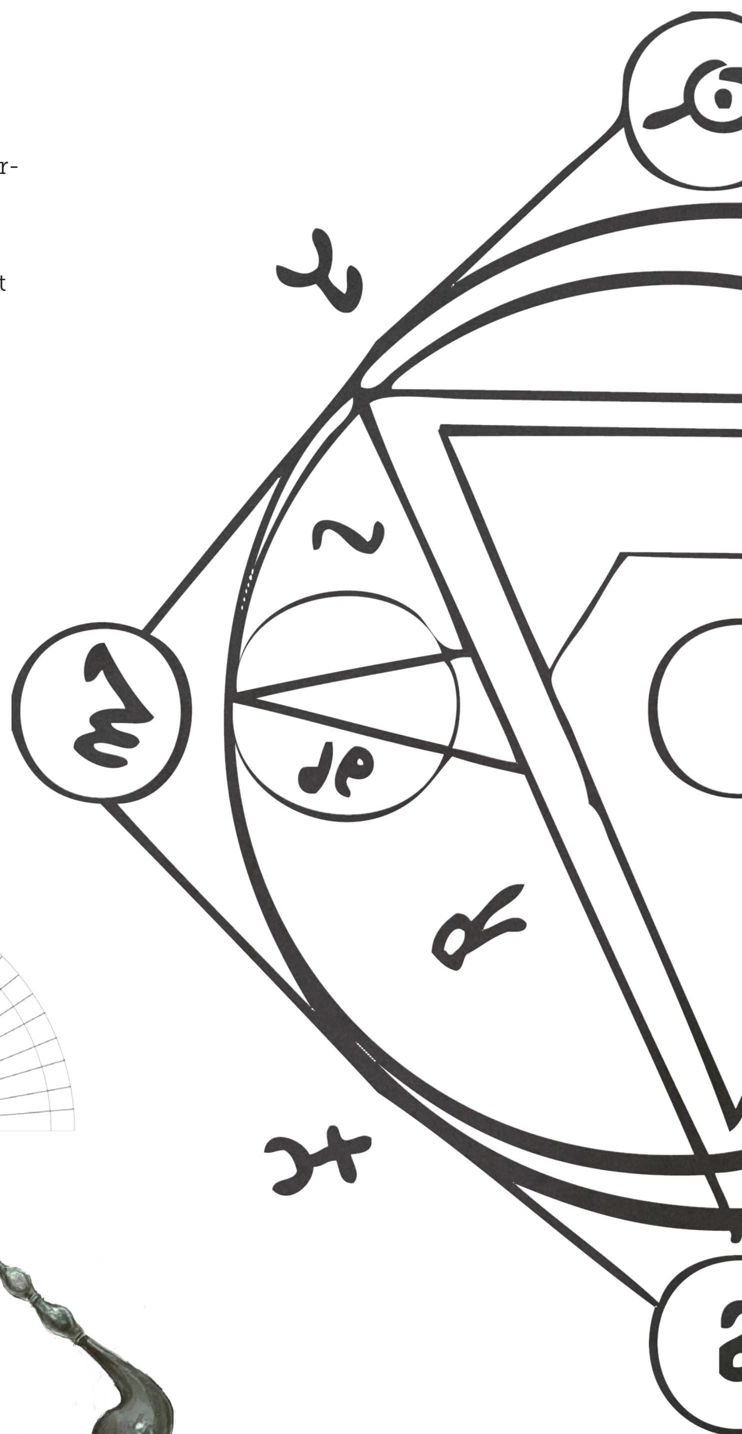


SILVER SWORDS

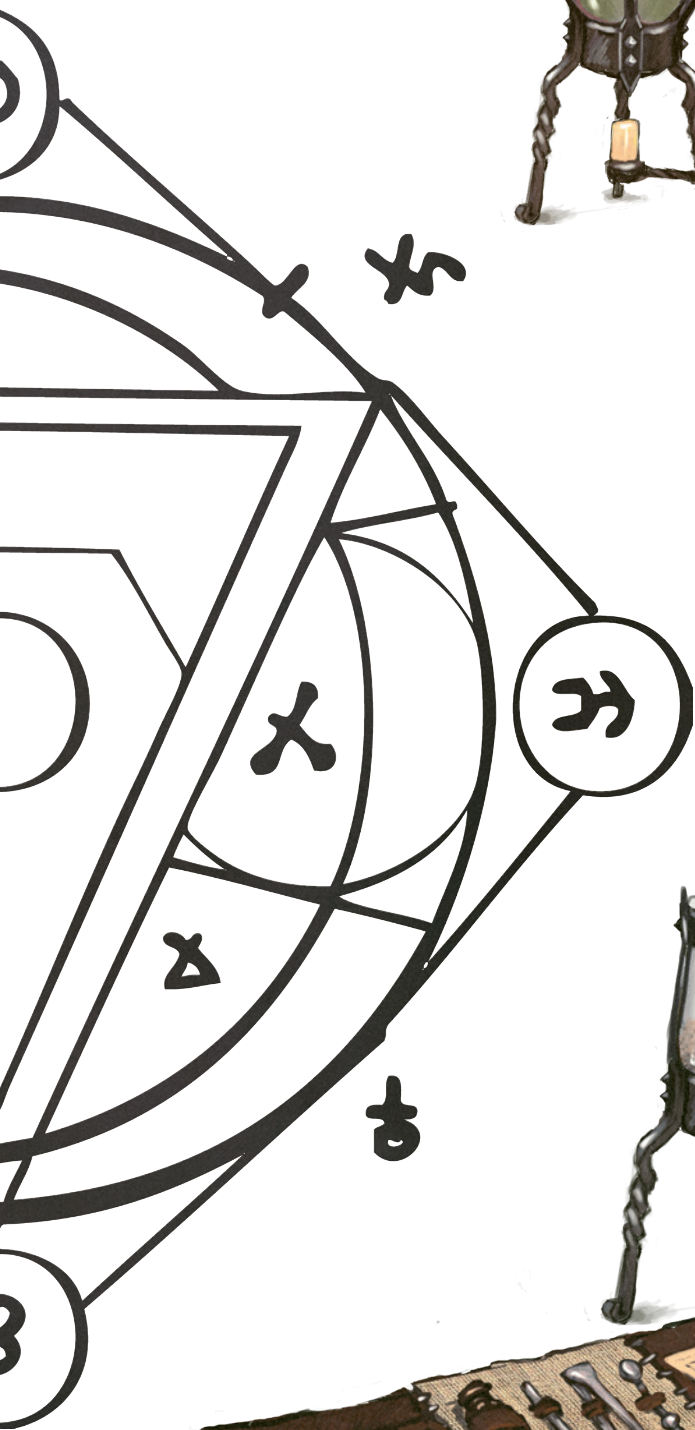
The silver swords are used for fighting monsters. They're distinct from the steel swords because of their slightly curved crossguard and more delicately constructed blades.

ALCHEMY

As in the first game, alchemy is a very important part of Witcher 2, and work on the appearance of Geralt's portable alchemical set took us some time. The illustrations shown here depict different variants of portable alembics, which are an element of this part of witcher equipment. This device allows our hero to brew potions that enhance his combat effectiveness.















A slim man was lying by its side, delicately nudging the cords of a lute. His eyes were covered by a fancy hat the color of a plum, adorned with a silver buckle and a long, nervous, heron feather.
Geralt knew the hat and the feather. Both were famous from the Buina to the Yaruga, known at courts, keeps, inns, taverns and brothels. Especially at the brothels.

Andrzej Sapkowski, The Bounds of Possibility

Dandelion



The witcher's companion, Dandelion, or more precisely viscount Julian Pankratz de Lettenhove is a famous troubadour, but also a fop, a womanizer and a dandy. When making the character's model, our artists had no problem with visualizing him. Dandelion's appearance, as usual, speaks for itself.

Some instantly recognizable elements of Dandelion's appearance, such as gaudy, ornate clothes, were already present during our work on the first part of the game. Now they were enriched with a few more details, among them the distinctive plumed hat with a long feather.

Dandelion's clothes were to correspond with this character's personality – that of a travelling bard. It consists of clothing and accessories inspired by fashion from the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries.

Even though the Dandelion described in the novels wears no beard, we decided to add a detail in the form of a neatly trimmed beard. This element gives the character's features some coherence and allows us to emphasize his care for external appearance.









Triss Merigold

Sorceress Triss Merigold, Geralt's friend and former lover, is one of the most important supporting characters in The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings. She accompanies our hero during his travels, and the choices the player will make concerning her will heavily influence the story.

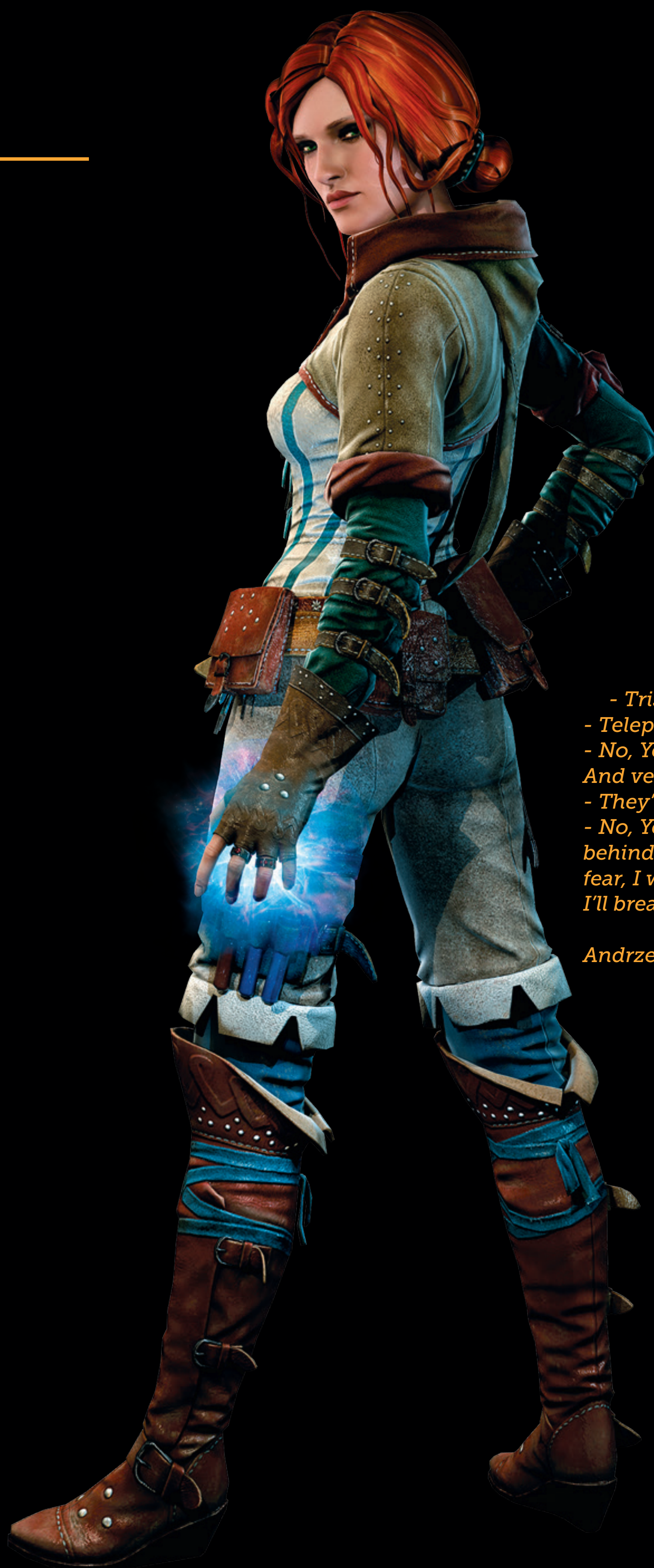
"If Triss Marigold couldn't be my girlfriend, I'd like her to at least be my sister" – this phrase may be humorous, but it still gives a good impression of the effect we wanted to get when working on the sorceress' new appearance. Triss's appearance changed the most of all characters we met in the first game. Her new clothes were to be equally elegant, functional, and comfortable for traveling. We based them on a 15th century doublet. Its skin-tight cut underlines the sorceress' shapely figure perfectly, especially when coupled with trousers and high topped boots. The male clothing, fingerless leather gloves and pinned up hair make her stand out among other women, and turn her into a "tomboy".

Triss' personality has changed too. She's no longer the girl from the novels known to "giggle like a flapper". Now she's a decisive, brave woman. She knows what she wants and she won't hesitate to take risks in order to get it. Her new appearance is also a reflection of this change. One can openly admit that Triss grew up and is more mature, though she has lost none of her personal charm and grace.



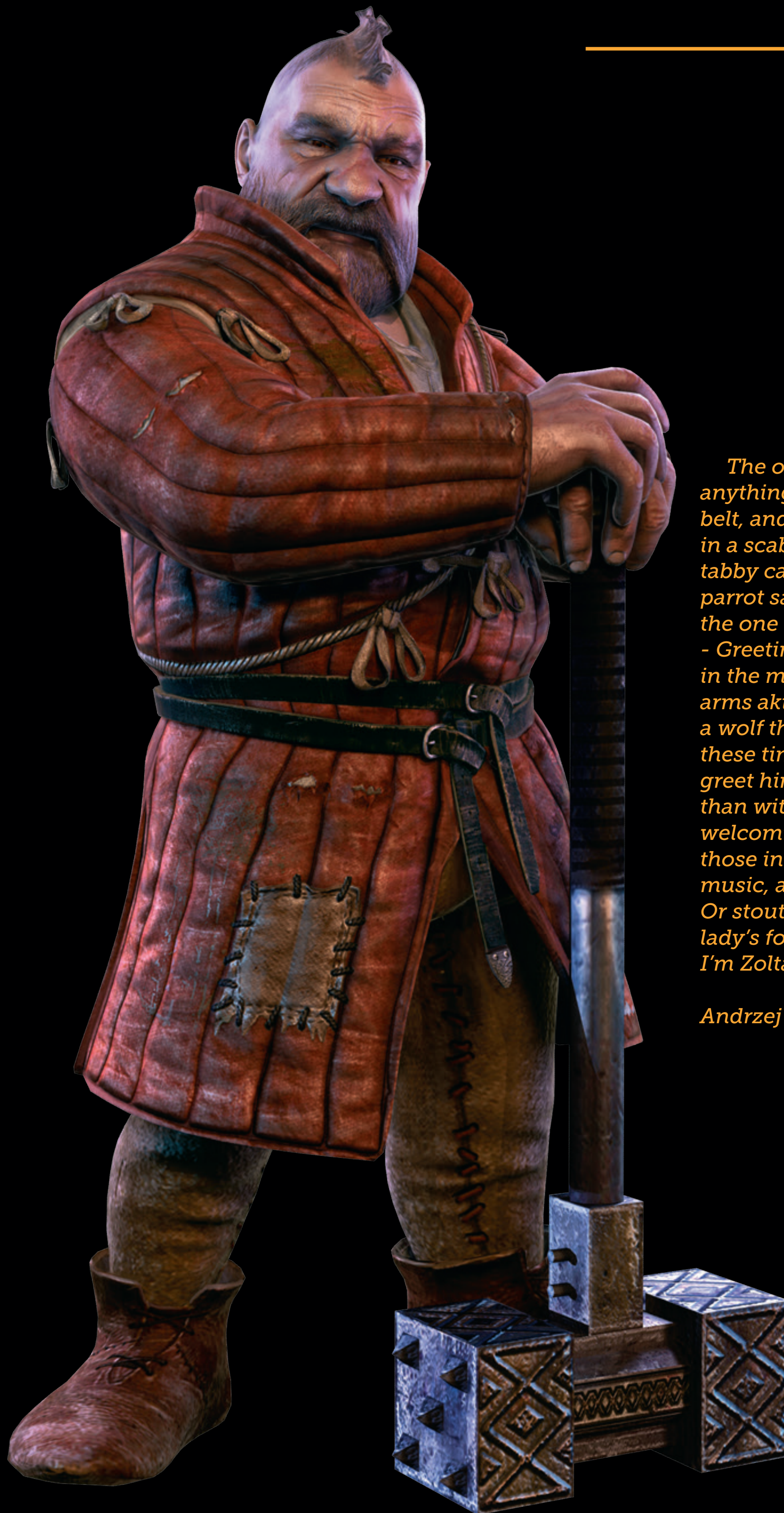






- Triss... – she mumbled.
- Teleport us out of here!
- No, Yennefer – Triss' voice was calm. And very cold.
- They'll kill us...
- No, Yennefer. I won't run. I won't hide behind the Lodge's skirt. And have no fear, I won't faint from fear like at Sodden. I'll break it in myself. I already did!

Andrzej Sapkowski, The Lady of the Lake



The one at the front didn't carry anything. He had a small axe at his belt, and a long sword at his back, in a scabbard covered in the skin of tabby cats. A green, wet and ruffled parrot sat on his shoulder. He was the one to hail them.
- Greetings! – He hollered, stopping in the middle of the road with his arms akimbo. - I'd prefer to meet a wolf than a man in a forest in these times, and even then I'd rather greet him with a crossbow bolt than with a good word! But those welcoming others with singing, those introducing themselves with music, are clearly stout fellows! Or stout lasses, begging the fair lady's forgiveness! Greetings! I'm Zoltan Chivay.

Andrzej Sapkowski, Baptism of Fire

Zoltan Chivay

The dwarf Zoltan Chivay is Geralt's cordial friend from the time even before the events of the first game. The short, sturdy dwarf kept his appearance from the previous game, though of course his model was built from scratch using our new graphics engine.

Though our artists had no doubts as to how Zoltan would look in this part of the game, the final model was created only after the anatomy and proportions of the dwarven race were redesigned. With that basis, Chivay was given his face and distinctive haircut. As a veteran of the Battle of Brenna, Zoltan also kept the "military" element of his clothing, that is: a worn-out gambison.

According to the literary original, Zoltan was armed with a sword, so we decided to go with that, giving him exactly that weapon. It's certainly a departure from the stereotypical image of a dwarf using an axe or a hammer.







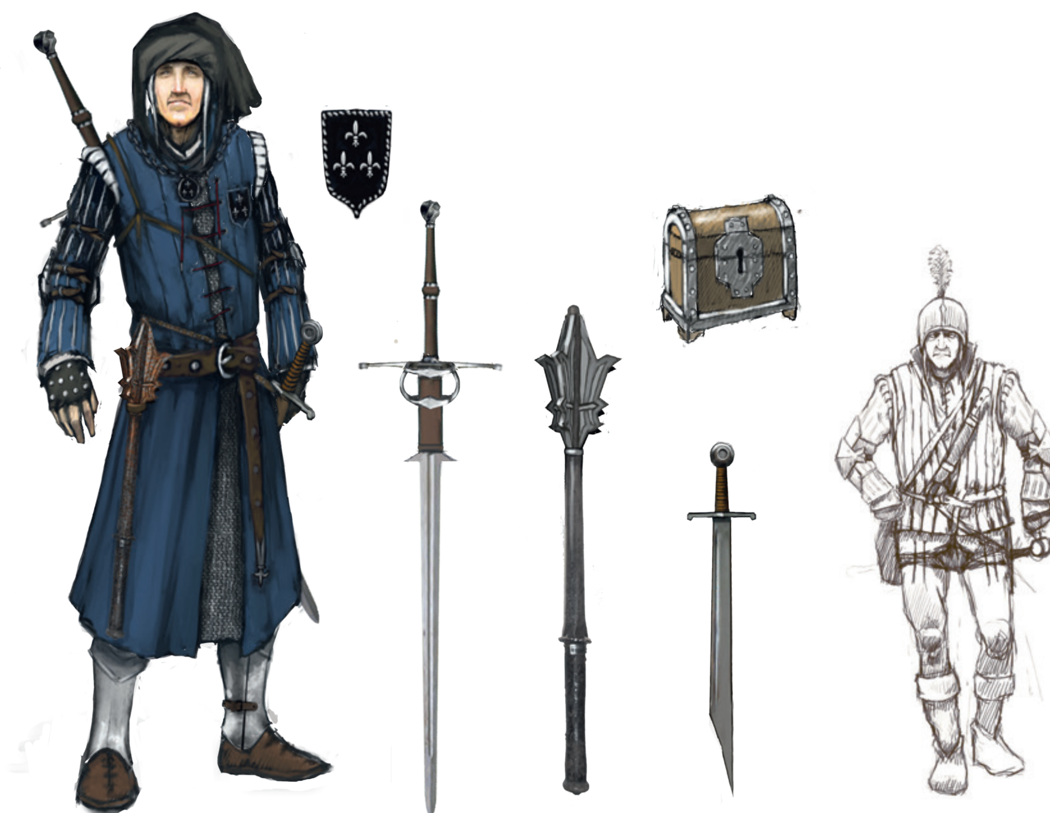


Vernon Roche

Vernon Roche, Commander of the Blue Stripes – King Foltest's special forces – is one of the most important characters in the game. Depending on the player's choices, he and Geralt may stand side by side.

Vernon is a common man, elevated to his rank by the Temerian king himself. At first sight he doesn't look like a veteran of years of fighting nonhumans. His clothes – a chap-erone and an overcoat – remind us instead of a merchant or burgher. However coupling this attire with his face and his rough, unyielding personality showcases the contrast we aimed at. Though Roche wears a mail beneath his clothes, he doesn't really need to be clad in steel to inspire respect with his appear-ance alone. Suffice to say that those who dismiss him make a big mistake. Vernon's rank and position are signified by the Blue Stripes' insignia he wears, as well as by the medallion bearing the crest of the kingdom he serves with his full devotion and complete dedication. The words "For King and Temeria" become a true oath in his mouth.

Vernon is an experienced soldier who rarely parts with his arms. His main weapon is a two-handed sword, though he also carries a heavy mace and a backsword. This selection of arms is quite different than that used by Geralt. Unlike the witcher, Roche prefers to fight with less finesse, but more brutally.



- Judging by that cockade, you're in king Demavend's special forces?
- Yes, my lady.
- Your rank?
- Captain.
- Excellent [...] Demavend's army, as I can now ascertain to my satisfaction, finally grew a habit of handing out officers' patents to soldiers with balls.

Andrzej Sapkowski, Time of Disdain





Only one elf, a Scoia'tael from Iorveth's routed unit, recently heavily tortured in the Laundry, was calm and collected, busily inscribing: "Freedom or death" on the timber wall.

Andrzej Sapkowski, Baptism of Fire

Iorveth

Iorveth is a character created from scratch for the second witcher game's story. There are precious few references to the elf of that name in the novels. These inspired us to expand him into a fully fledged character.

We wanted Iorveth to be a person equally capable as an adversary and as an ally. The cooperation between artists and designers allowed us to achieve the desired effect.

Iorveth is the commander of one of the last elven units that still fight humans. The elf's once beautiful face is now cruelly scarred – that is the price he paid for his determination. The Aen Seidhe's pride makes him conceal the scars, so he covers part of his face with a cowl. His clothes are a mixture of human and elven garments, typical of the Scoia'tael guerillas. One detail that stands out is a collection of badges from the special forces that human kingdoms recruit to fight nonhumans. Their owners had the misfortune of running into Iorveth, and he only lacks Vernon Roche's badge to make the collection complete.





Iorveth's weapon is a real masterpiece of elven handiwork. The bow's slender double limbs are powerful enough to launch an arrow that will pierce mail armor like a linen shirt. It's a combination of elegance and murderous efficiency, a fact many an unlucky dh'oinne would attest to if they still could.



Dethmold

Dethmold of Ban Ard is a sorcerer for whom any and all ethical and moral norms have ceased to exist. Since his brother died in the incident at Thanedd, Dethmold changed a lot. And not for the better. He won't hesitate to follow any means to his ends, treating others like tools and trampling more than one corpse on his way.

The above illustrations show the process of creating this character's concept art. Visions of the sorcerer sometimes diverge from one another wildly, but all have one thing in common – we wanted to make the character unsettling in a way. He is most certainly not a nice old man that one might want to leave one's younger siblings with.

Dethmold is a wind sorcerer, therefore his most distinctive possession is his staff that ends in an anemoscope weathervane. He has a sack and bottles of magical infusions on his belt. We also couldn't omit armor fragments, worn more for aesthetic reasons than for protection.This way the Ban Ard sorcerer fits the fashion style we deemed typical of his confreres.









„After a while, Keira Metz returned, but not alone. She was accompanied by a flaxen-haired sorcerer, whom was introduced to Geralt the day before as Dethmold of Ban Ard. The man cursed at the sight of the witcher, slamming his fist into his open palm.
- Damn! Is he the one Yennefer is so fond of?
- Yes – said Keira. - Geralt of Rivia. The problem is, I've no idea how are things with Yennefer...
- Neither do I – Dethmold shrugged.
- Either way, he's involved now. He saw too much. Take him to Philippa, she'll decide. Bind him."

Andrzej Sapkowski, Time of Disdain



But the assassin was not a novice. He stooped and also started circling, his pace soft like a cat's. Suddenly, he jumped, whirled his sword, and then whirled himself, shortening the distance. The witcher did not confront him. He was content with a swift upper feint that forced the assassin to jump away.

Andrzej Sapkowski,
The Sword of Destiny

Letho



Letho is witcher Geralt's main antagonistand was designed to be a living contradiction. Muscular hands, a thick neck, broad chest and a thick brow are reminiscent of an ape, but that huge, bald man with a wrestler's build moves swiftly and gracefully like a cat. The face fitting a dumb brute shows no emotion, but that façade conceals a cold, calculating mind.

The mysterious kingslayer's identity remains a mystery through much of the game's story. It's obvious he's responsible for the deaths of at least two rulers of the Northern Kingdoms. He seemingly cooperates with the elves, but it quickly turns out that the Scoia'tael guerillas are but tools in his hands. In time, it is revealed that he's following his own mysterious plans.

Letho's clothes are simple and functional. The sleeveless leather jacket, multiple belts and buckles holding reserve weapons and necessary equipment, and above all else the sword worn on the back, are immediately reminiscent of witcher gear. Letho is our hero's equal both in terms of his abilities and his equipment.







Foltest

Foltest, lord of Temeria, Pontar, Mahakam and Sodden and recently the senior Protector of Brugge demonstrated his noble profile to all, turning his head towards the window.

Andrzej Sapkowski, Blood of Elves

Apart from his physical traits as described in the novels, such as a handsome face and a noble profile, we took Foltest's personality traits into consideration when designing his appearance. The novels paint a picture of a strong, independent ruler who breaks all norms according to his whim. That description resulted in his current appearance: that of a handsome middle-aged man in good shape. His regular features are in harmony with his firm, determined air and slightly wry mouth.

The front of the monarch's rich attire is adorned with a heraldic shield. A keen eye will recognize more than just Temerian lilies – the cross moline of Brugge and the coats of arms of all other domains under Foltest's royal rule are on display.





Henselt

- No, no, and one more no! – bellowed king Henselt, pounding the table top with both of his fists so hard that a goblet overturned and ink pots trembled.
- I will have no discussion on that subject! No tender in this case! Enough, schluss, deireadh!
[...] - I object to such remarks! – bellowed Henselt, this time so loudly that not many buffalos would keep up with him.
- I object to such remarks, especially made by various spies! I'm a bloody king!

Andrzej Sapkowski, The Lady of the Lake

Henselt, the king of Kaedwen, is a massive, bearded man with the appearance of a robber. Greedy and violent, he has always been a problem for his neighbors. He once colluded with Nilfgaard to satisfy his territorial ambitions, and he would surely do so again if it would bring him any benefits. His hatred for the nonhumans is widely known.

When designing this character, we wanted to convey such personality traits as boisterousness and intransigence. Apart from his huge frame, the small, piercing eyes and furrowed brow are his most distinctive features. These convey his violent, obstinate disposition.
The enclosed crown of a sovereign ruler reflects his attitude to ruling. Henselt definitely doesn't like others to tell him what to do.

[...] locals and visitors alike were for the most part occupied by activities typical for their nation or profession. Respectable merchants quarreled with dwarves about prices of goods and loan interests. Less respectable merchants pinched the arses of the girls distributing ale and cabbage with peas. Local idiots pretended to be well informed. The girls tried to look attractive to those with money, and to deter those without it at the same time. Drivers and fishermen drank as if a ban on growing hop was to be issued tomorrow. Sailors sang a song praising the sea waves, the bravery of captains', and the graces of mermaids, focusing on the latter with great detail.

Andrzej Sapkowski, The Lesser Evil





The vast majority of people Geralt meets are simple commoners. Craftsmen, merchants, scholars, whores, fishermen, innkeepers, children – the folk of towns and settlements of the Northern Kingdoms, usually busy with their day-to-day affairs. This section is about them.

The background characters are an important element of every fictional world – they make it more believable and colorful by living out their lives beside the main story. We made tried to make them as diverse as possible. Thanks to modular building of characters, based on different clothing elements, we achieved a wide variety of different classes, professions, genders and ages.



Attention to realism and details of appearance was as important to the design of background characters as it was in the design of other elements of the environment. Details such as a bag, a pouch, a ladle at the belt, a knife, a mug or a key ring make the character look less generic and more natural – we can suggest that he or she doesn't carry these items for show, but that they're important for his or her occupation or profession. We wanted the streets in The Witcher 2 to be full of real people not out-of-context "extras" in their medieval Sunday best.













The priests were created as a separate background group. We attempted to attain the appearance of a clergyman without suggesting any specific religion. These illustrations depict the work's final appearance, as well as initial sketches of faces and clothing details.

Whores, strumpets, courtesans, "women of negotiable affection" – whatever one might call them, the representatives of this profession are an element of the game world. Though the initial sketches can be at times quite different from their final appearance in game, looking at the ideas that were the basis of the final look might be worth your while. Hair cut short and clothesrevealing legs are something of a call-sign of this profession. Details such as jewelry, tattoos or garters complete the image.











- In my day – said Yarpen Zigrin – warlocks sat in their towers reading learned tomes and stirring the contents of melting pots with ladles. They didn't loaf about warriors, they didn't interfere with our business. And they didn't bump and grind before men's eyes.
- The bumping and grinding, truth be told, is done with quite an arse –said Dandelion while tuning his lute.
Andrzej Sapkowski, The Limit of Possibility



Sorcerers and sorceresses are an inherent element of most fantasy worlds. They play a special part in the Witcher universe, as they're a powerful faction that influences the politics and status quo of the Northern Kingdoms. We wanted to make prominent, distinctive sorcerer personas. They were supposed to look a bit eccentric, but also to command respect. Bands, trimming and scrolls covered in magical symbols signify their status and profession.







Sorceresses are more eager to use their powers and abilities in order to slow down the aging process and to emphasize their beauty, so most look no older than thirty-something. Their clothes, which are a variant of courtly attire, are both fashionable and provocative at the same time. We can see some versions on the neighboring page. Sorcerers wear armor elements, such as epaulettes or gloves, mainly as decoration. These still serve to underline the aggressive and destructive aspects of the powers they wield, just as mundane weapons do.









Working on the dwarves' appearance was not a huge problem. Our artists made a satisfactory image of the race very quickly, providing us with a solid basis for further work. They focused on adequate proportions and physiognomy first and foremost. The aim was to create believable dwarves, a de facto separate species, and not simply short, bearded humans. The effects can be seen on the in-game graphics found on the neighboring page.









The assimilated elves are the ones that chose or were forced to live among humans by various circumstances. Therefore they often meet with disdain of their prouder kin and open hostility and intolerance of their new neighbors. Despite that, it's the only alternative for many. Their clothes depend on their profession or social position, but it's usually a mix of their indigenous clothes with elements of human clothing. This distinctive style gave us a lot of leeway when detailing their final image.







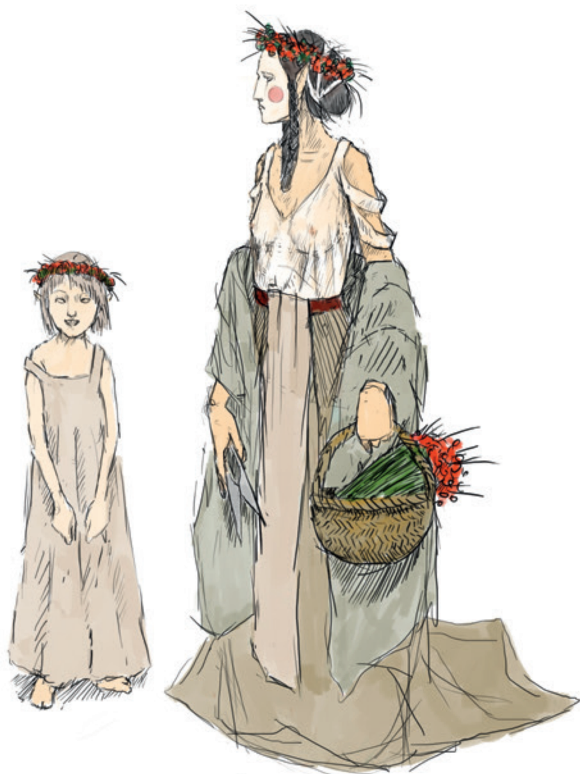


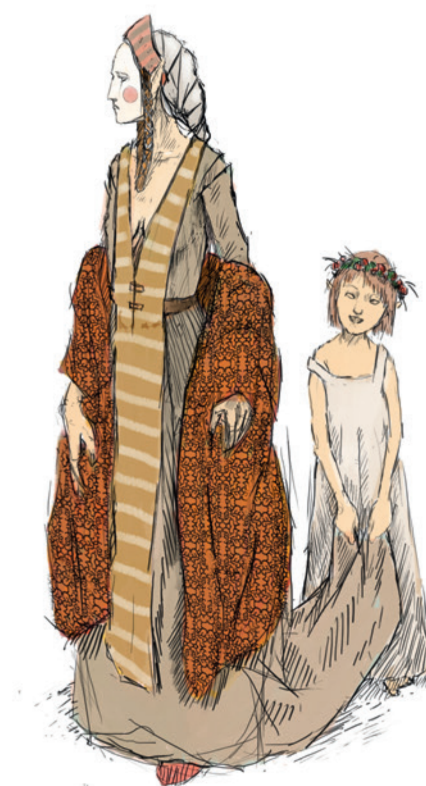


The world created by Andrzej Sapkowski is still inhabited by small groups of the Aen Seidhe – proud pure-blood elves who still practice the customs and traditions of their people.

Before we began work on the appearance of assimilated elves living among humans, we created numerous concept drawings depicting this race's image in its original, "pure" form.

The sketches and drawings depicted on these pages represent but a small fraction of all the projects our graphic artists made before the final image of the classical elven culture was created. This image then served as the basis for other groups and factions associated with that race. All the work done for this part of the game would fill another album.





The Scoia'tael, or the Squirrels, is the overall name for all nonhuman freedom fighters. These illustrations depict the elves fighting in their ranks.



The guerrilla Scoia'tael often lack equipment, food and weapons. We felt it logical that they would sometimes have to use elements of armor and clothing captured during attacks on human caravans or simply looted from the corpses of vanquished enemies. We supplemented this idea by adding trophies in the form of masks worn by the worst of their sworn enemies – the Blue Stripes, the Temerian special forces. Squirrel tails worn as decoration are another interesting detail – the Scoia'tael owe their name to them.





They surrounded them suddenly, swiftly, from all sides. Men in conical helmets, mail and dark blue tunics with the golden-black checkerboard of Verden at their chests. They surrounded them, but none approached or touched a weapon.
- From where, and where to? – barked a stocky individual in worn green clothes, as he stopped before Geralt, spacing his arched legs widely. His face was dark and wrinkled, like a dried plum. A bow and white-feathered arrows stuck out from behind his back and high above his head.

Andrzej Sapkowski, The Sword of Destiny

The class, age, provenance, height, corpulence or nationality do not matter. Whether because of necessity or lifestyle preferences, they are all connected by their warrior profession. The witcher will meet many warriors during his journey, from steel-clad knights of the order, through simple men-at-arms to bandits and marauders. They can become either his mortal enemies or faithful allies.

During work on the warriors' equipment, our graphic artists used both scientific publications as well as historical accounts – paintings, etchings, drawings and fencing treaties. They made sure that every faction or military formation would have a set of details based on their provenance and training, that would distinguish them from other groups.

The color illustration on the neighboring page depicts the design of the arms and armor of Adam Pangratt's mercenaries. These professionals have earned their reputation as deadly opponents. If the pay is decent, they fear neither man, nor monster, nor witcher.

The illustrations above depict a gallery of bandit characters. Modular character design allowed us to create colorful, varied figures in this case, too. The randomly chosen parts of armor, equipment and headgear from various classes and professions, as well as the diversified weapons, give them a ragged appearance.





Kaedwen is a kingdom in the northeast, largely covered in thick forests. Compared to Redania and Temeria, it's a bit out of the way, so when we were designing warriors hailing from there, we decided to stress certain rusticness in their appearance. The Kaedweni soldiers are armed with heavy axes and maces, and their helmets are based on early kettle hats. Because of the colder climate of their land, they dress warmer than their south-western counterparts – the tunics with the unicorn coat of arms are supplemented with heavy furs placed on their shoulders.





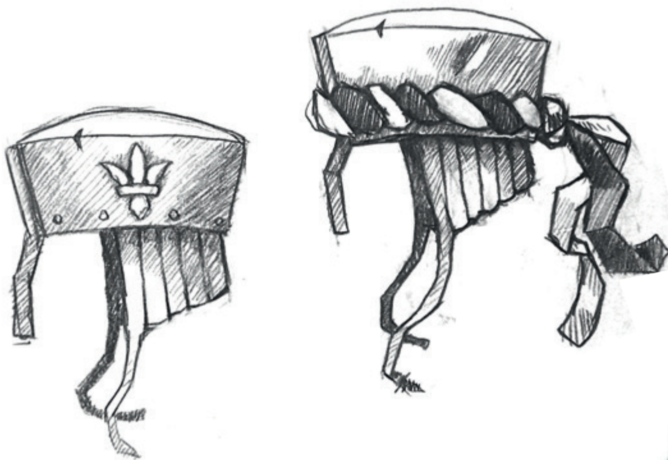
The Kaedweni knights also follow the same concept. Their equipment, including the basinet helmets, is historically 100 years older than the Temerian equipment. They also dress warmer, and details such as belt fittings and armor décor in the shape of oaken leafs make them stand out when compared to the knights of other factions.





The equipment of Temerian knights is based on 15th century armor. Plate armor is worn over thick gambisons and the breastplates of Foltest's men are adorned with distinctive lilies.

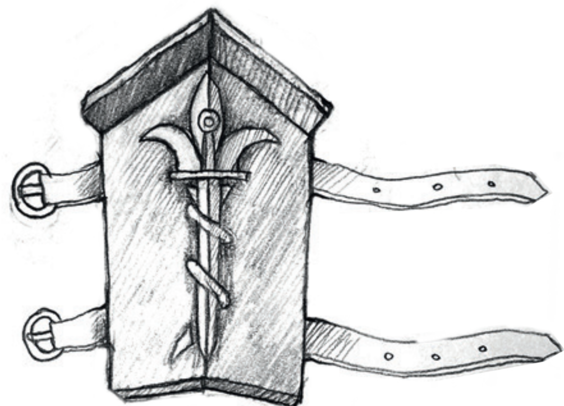
The Blue Stripes are an elite Temerian special forces unit. Created to fight the Scoia'tael, they proved their worth many times, even in other situations. They'retough veterans armed to the teeth – the best of the best.





Work on their appearance began with simple concept sketches and designing their overall appearance. The illustrations visible here depict various stages of the process. The black and white sketches concentrate on equipment and weapons. Though they're not nearly as armored as knights, they're more mobile and versatile than them. As Foltest's most trusted men, the Blue Stripes have access to practically any equipment they need to complete their missions. The combination of all these traits resulted in an equivalent of a modern anti-terrorist unit.











- If you would allow me, lady and gentlemen – a tone all too familiar to those present entered Shilard Fitz-Oesterlen's voice, a tone meaning that the ambassador considers his next words to be extremely important. - If you would allow me, lady and gentlemen, I shall read the contents of the aide memorie I received from His Imperial Highness Emhyr var Emreis, by the Great Sun's grace the Emperor of Nilfgaard...
- Oh no. Not again – Demavend gritted his teeth, and Dijsktra simply groaned. It did not escape Shilard's attention, for it could not.
- The note is long – he admitted. – Therefore I will summarize it instead of reading it. His Imperial Highness expresses immense pleasure on how the negotiations proceed, and as a man of peaceful disposition, he happily welcomes the compromises and reconciliations achieved. His Imperial Highness wishes the negotiations to progress and end to mutual benefit...

Andrzej Sapkowski, The Lady of the Lake

The appearance of the emissaries from the Nilfgaardian Empire in the game allowed us to introduce a plethora of colorful characters that stand out from the inhabitants of the North.





Work on the final appearance of the Nilfgaardian soldiers took some time. We obviously started with colors – black clothes, golden ornaments and the symbol of the sun. The sketches clearly show that we had some very exotic concepts for the armor and equipment.

We finally decided on armament that stylistically resembled the early Renaissance. We focused on creating the soldiers of an "evil empire" looking like a representational company. Elements such as high topped boots allowed us to optically slenderize their profiles. The final element contributing to that effect is the form of the Nilfgaardian helmets, similar to German helmets from the first half of the 20th century, crowned with the black wings of predatory birds.

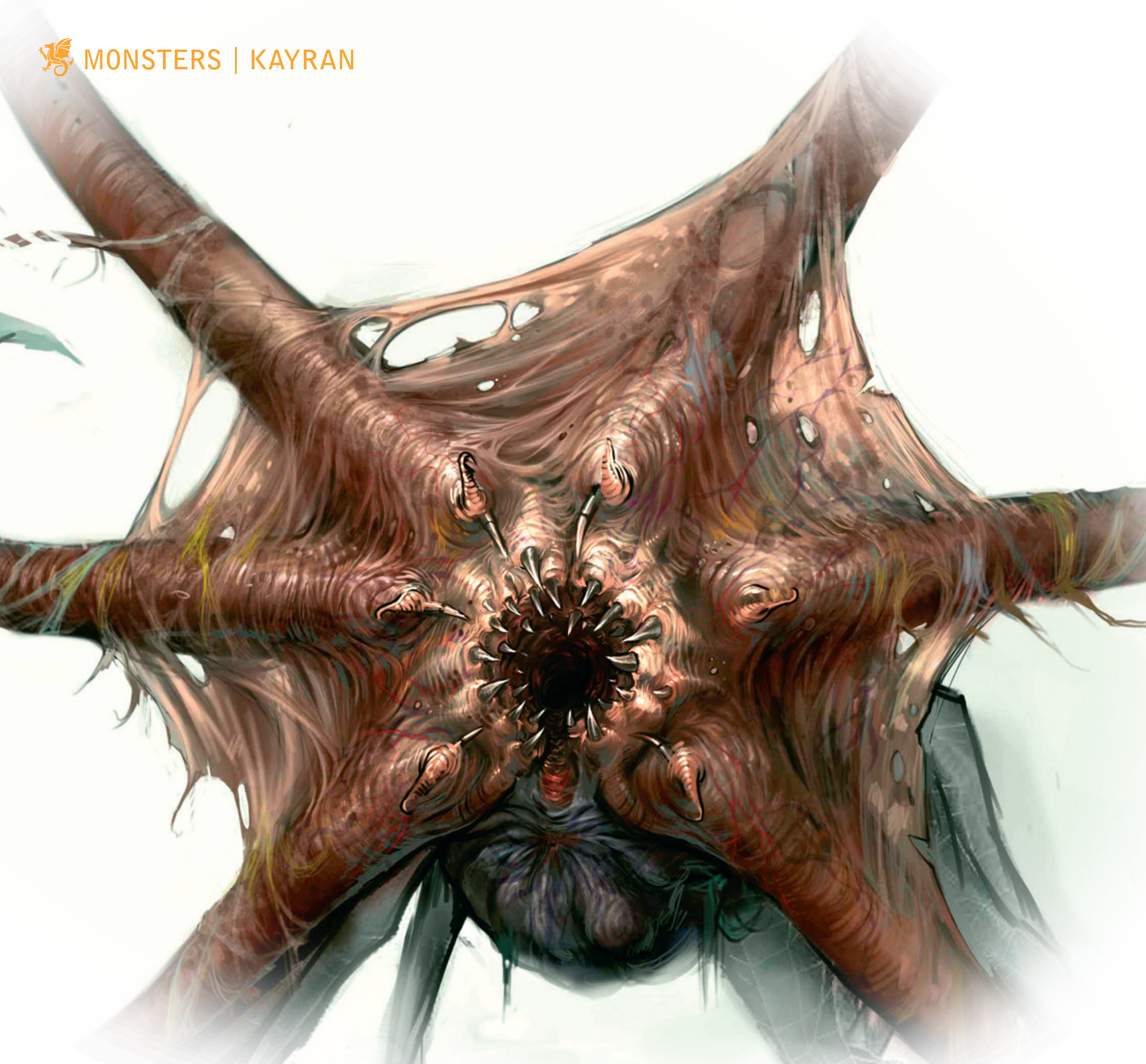


Shilard Fitz-Oesterlen, the Emperor's emissary, was supposed to look like a diplomat with years of experience at first sight. The concept sketches above show the initial designs of this character.

The black-and-gold clothes of the Nilfgaardian emissary follow the Imperial fashion. The rings, the cane and the medallion with the symbol of the sun signify his status and function. The ornate armored glove on his right hand is a veiled threat in a way – it symbolizes the Imperial might that he represents. This older man wears a mask of courtesy on his face, but in reality Shilard is a consummate politician, playing his cards like a true master. He's a completely different kind of opponent – embodying not personal armed power but the strength of a truly Machiavellian mind.

MONSTERS





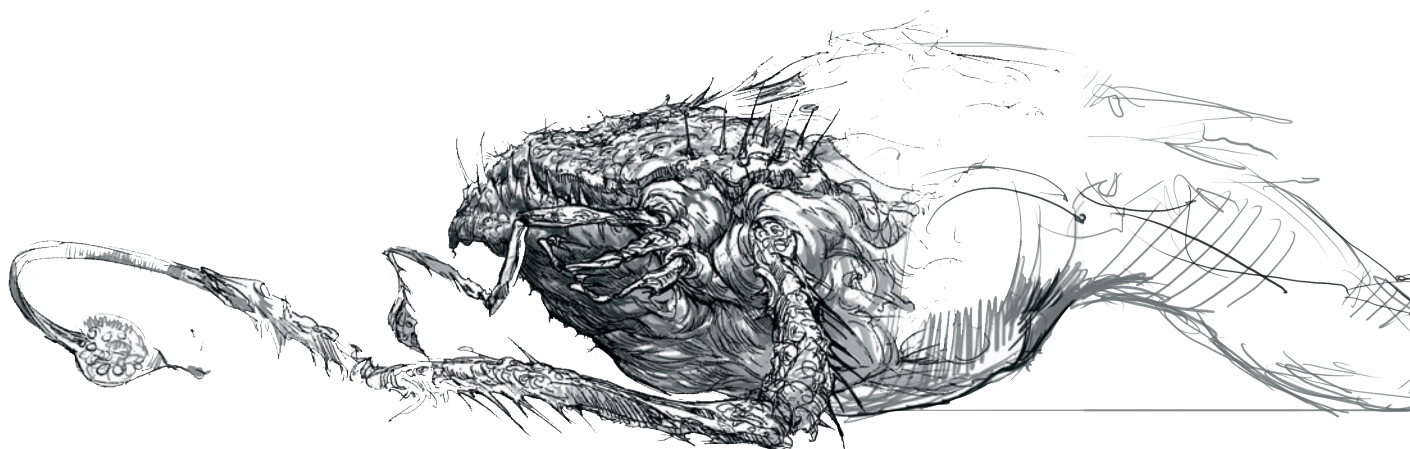
[...] The Hyphydridae family of the order Amphipoda, that is, Different-footed, includes four species. Two of them live solely in tropical waters. In our climate, however, one can presently, though very rarely, find the small Hyphydra Longicauda, and the Zslightly larger Hyphydra marginata. The biotope of both species is made up of stagnant or slowly flowing waters. The species are indeed predatory and prefer warm-blooded creatures as sustenance. You wish to add anything?

Andrzej Sapkowski, Blood of Elves

The Kayran, known as "the Old Man" by the people of Flotsam, is a river monster related to the aeschna. It's hard to tell whether it is a separate species or a singular specimen with a unique mutation. It dwells in the depths of the Pontar where it can remain hidden despite its monstrous size. It consumes nearly everything that falls into its maw. The Old Man hunts its victims while hidden beneath the surface, pulling cows, horses or unwary drunk sailors from the wharf or the decks of passing punts.

The Kayran's anatomy contains elements typical to both crustaceans and cephalopods. Its elongated thorax is hidden beneath a knobby chitin carapace,





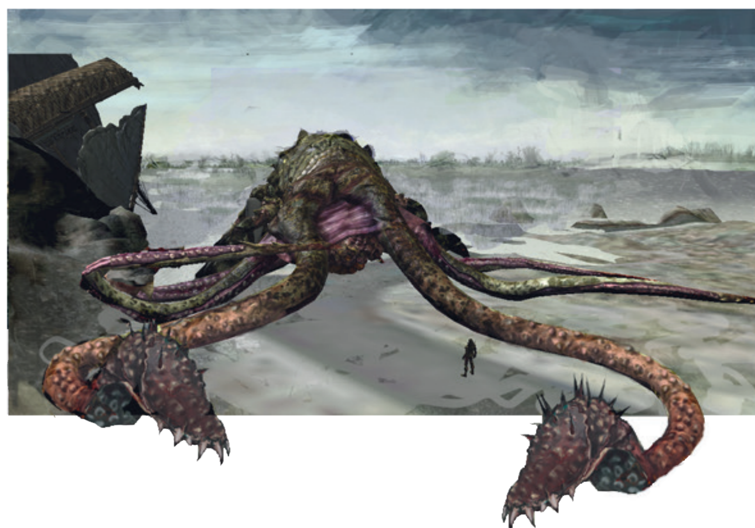
and three pairs of limbs facilitate its movement on the riverbed. Its long, thick tentacles allow it to capture prey and carry it to its toothed maw. At the same time, however, they're one of its weak spots. Unlike the thorax, they're not covered by its hard shell, making them vulnerable to attack. Luckily, there are no creatures in its natural ecosystem that could threaten the monster in any way. The Old Man is at the top of the food chain in this section of the Pontar. One would need more than a sharp sword to deal with this monstrosity – those who would hunt it without proper preparation and abilities would simply become its next meals.



The Kayran is the main monster that Geralt fights in the first act. It is based on the aeschna from the novels, which the witcher faced on the Temerian-Redanian border along the Pontar, near Oxenfurt. As we worked on it, however, the monster's appearance became unique, and its size became immense. Therefore, we decided to make it a new creature, firmly rooted in the local folklore of this part of the world.









- Where does it come from? Spells, magic?

- I have no idea, sire. The Sages research these phenomena. For us witchers, it is enough to know that strong will may create them. We also like to know how to fight them.

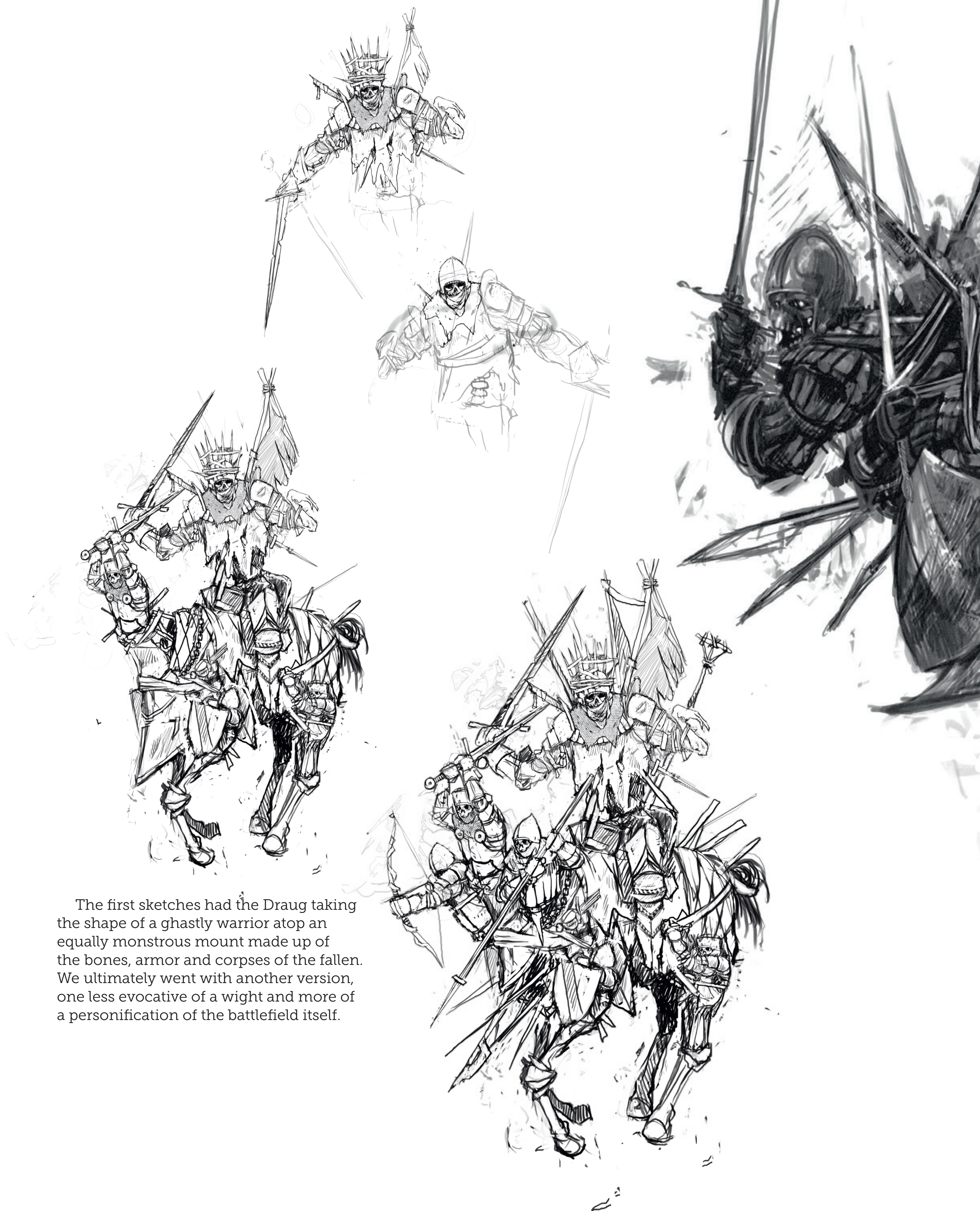
Andrzej Sapkowski, The Witcher

In the game's second act, Geralt will have to lift a curse from a battlefield where the souls of the fallen fight an eternal battle and cannot find rest. To do so, he'll have to face a Draug – a creature born of wrath, blood and hatred, an unchallenged ruler of a cursed domain,

The Draug is one of the most dangerous opponents in the entire game. The monster's huge form towers over the lesser wraiths. Its body is made up of remains from the battlefield – remnants of shattered siege engines, broken spears, swords, torn leather belts, bent armor plates, barding and shields. Crackling flames and a crest of smoke crown its shapeless head. The Draug is the battlefield's master, and it exists only to fight and kill.



These illustrations feature various phases of work on the Draug's final appearance. Before the final version was selected, many concepts were entertained, especially concerning its head. These included huge fancy steel helms adorned with shattered horns, a wrought mask, a fantastical creature's skull, a brass bell hovering above it, and even a completely headless shape, where the head is replaced by a crooked beam with a huge carrion bird sitting on it.



The first sketches had the Draug taking the shape of a ghastly warrior atop an equally monstrous mount made up of the bones, armor and corpses of the fallen. We ultimately went with another version, one less evocative of a wight and more of a personification of the battlefield itself.



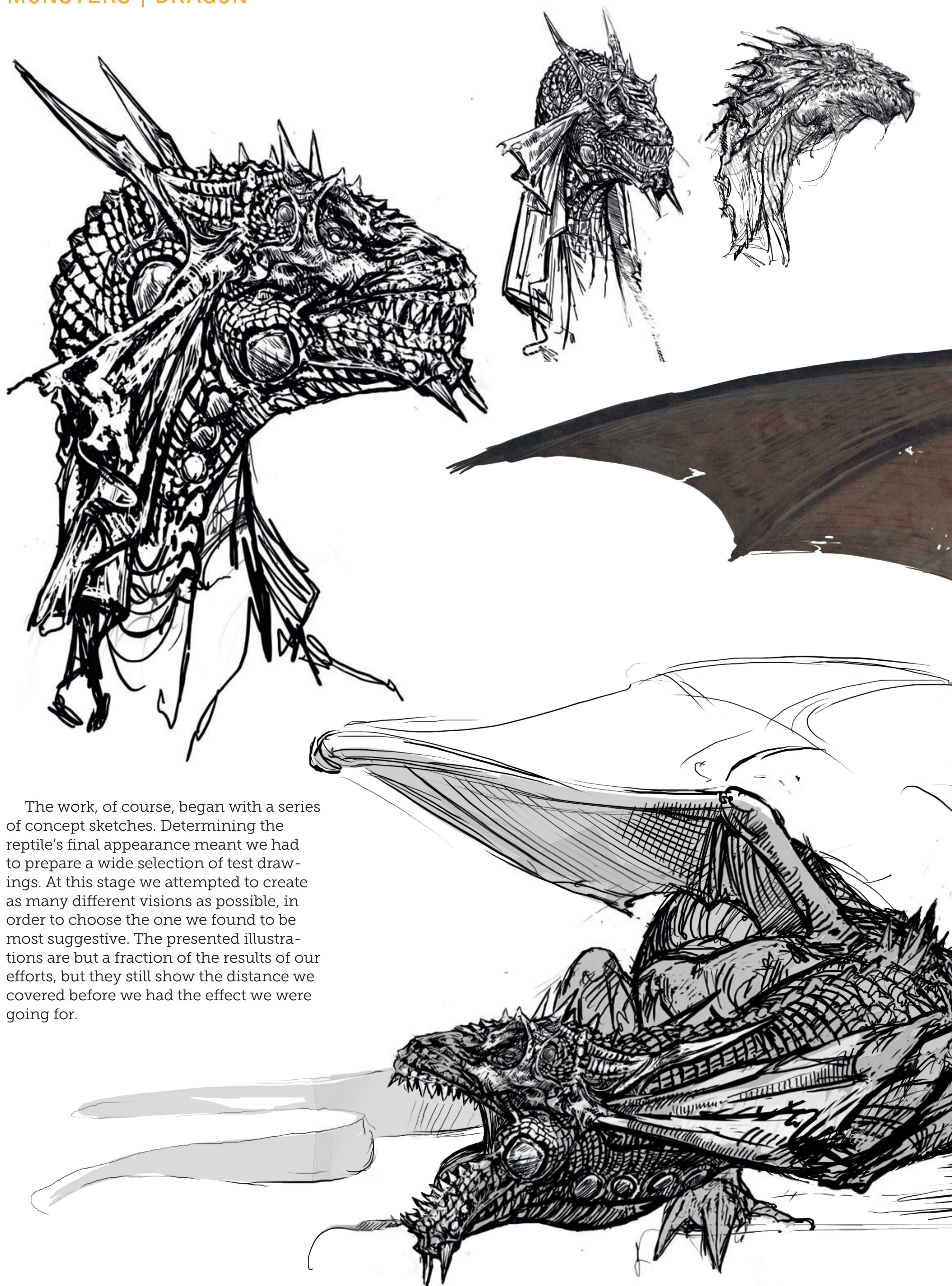




The dragon wound up, crouched on the ground and attacked from above its own back, with its tail, like a scorpion, hitting Garpike who tried to flank it, instead of Boholt. Garpike fell to the ground along with his horse, to the clang of armor, screaming and neighing. Boholt, approaching at a gallop, slashed with a terrible swing. The dragon dexterously jumped away, avoiding the wide blade. The gallop's impetus carried Boholt away. The dragon twisted, climbing to its hind legs, and attacked Sawfly with its claws, shredding the horse's belly and the rider's thigh in one swing.

Andrzej Sapkowski,
The Limit of Possibility

When we decided to introduce a dragon, we knew perfectly well that creating this creature would be one of our greatest challenges in the entire game. Unlike the Kayran or the Draug, which we could create enjoying a lot of leeway, elements of a dragon's appearance are very strongly tied to the canon of fantasy. On one hand, we wanted to rise up to the gamers' expectations regarding such an epic monster. On the other, we didn't want to propagate stereotypes or cliches but to develop our own, original vision of a dragon, worthy of the spot it occupies in the story.



The work, of course, began with a series of concept sketches. Determining the reptile's final appearance meant we had to prepare a wide selection of test drawings. At this stage we attempted to create as many different visions as possible, in order to choose the one we found to be most suggestive. The presented illustrations are but a fraction of the results of our efforts, but they still show the distance we covered before we had the effect we were going for.



Despite its huge size, with its massive shoulders and wide chest, the dragon is not a languid giant. These have an anatomical justification, too – here the muscles moving the wings during flight are attached. The creature's torso is, despite all appearances, quite slender and slightly thinner at the waist. The combination of these traits brings a greyhound's slim shape to mind. The head, placed on a muscular neck, is adorned with a pair of short horns, and the wide jaws are filled with pointed teeth. The dragon is a terrifying opponent, fully deserving its fearsome reputation.

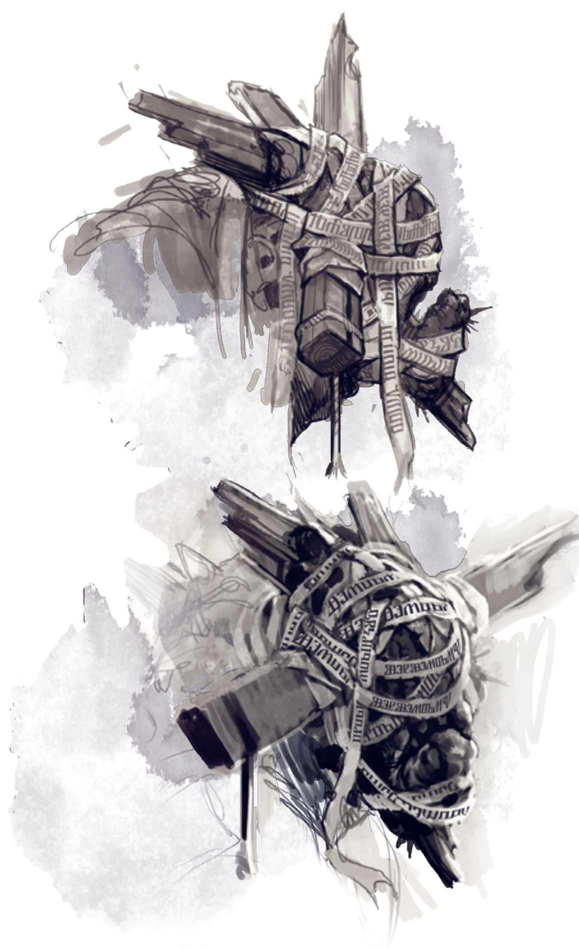
Elemental

- Sorcerers – explained Krepp – draw their power from natural forces, or, more precisely, the so called Four Elements or Roots. Air, Water, Fire and Earth. Each element has its own Dimension, called a Plane in the sorcerers' argot. So there is a Plane of Water, a Plane of Fire and so on. These Dimensions, inaccessible to us, are inhabited by creatures called genies.

Andrzej Sapkowski, The Last Wish

Just as genies are the native inhabitants of the elemental planes, elementals are lesser creatures born of the magic drawn from one of the Elements. They are radically different in appearance and size. When properly controlled, they're completely obedient to their owners' will. Powerful magic is necessary to create one, therefore they're usually only created by experienced sorcerers. Most often they are employed for tasks that do not require finesse, but brute strength alone. They're excellent as guardians of important items or places, ready to kill either all intruders or just those who they were told to. They know no pain, they do not tire, they do not sleep, they show no mercy or fear, they are unflinchingly loyal and never demand raises – in a word they're ideal servants.

The elemental in Philippa Eilhart's laboratory was certainly not made with gardening or dusting in mind. Made of clay and wooden beams, it's not the epitome of finesse, but its mighty arms command great strength. Instead of prehensile hands, it was given bludgeoning maces bristling with splinters of wood – they are used to smash and crush anything in its way. The elemental's head and fists are wrapped in bands covered in magical symbols and arcane signs. These animate its body and make it unfailingly obedient to its mistress.







Harpy

The list of creatures that can be blamed for the deed is quite long. It's opened by a pack of savage dogs, a plague quite common in wartime. You can't imagine what such dogs are capable of. Half the victims ascribed to chaotic monsters is in reality the work of packs of savage backyard mutts.
- So you rule monsters out?
- Not at all. It could have been a striga, a harpy, a graveir, a ghoul...

Andrzej Sapkowski, Baptism of Fire

The harpy is a winged humanoid. It's as large as a man, but its wingspan stretches several yards. Its body is a mockery of human appearance – wrinkled skin, sagging breasts and an oval head covered in thin, long hair make it resemble an old woman from one angle and a carrion bird such as a vulture or a condor from another. The front of the face has a bony beak which the harpy uses to rend its prey's flesh and to crush bones to get to the marrow. It also uses its prehensile front limbs to that end. Both its hands and its feet end in sharp talons.

These creatures are known for their telepathic abilities. They can penetrate a victim's mind and steal its dreams. Their talons and wings are equally dangerous. The former are used to shred opponents to pieces, the latter to land mighty blows. Harpies can create primitive weapons and baubles from the bones of killed animals and humans. They build their nests and lairs in inaccessible places – among mountain peaks and rocky ravines.

When we were creating this monster – half human, half bird – we wanted to make it really repulsive. The nearly hairless body and drooping skin should remind people of carrion birds. One sketch includes several variations of the harpy's head. The atrophy of its eyes is a result of the monster depending on its scent and psychic abilities to locate its victim.



Nekker

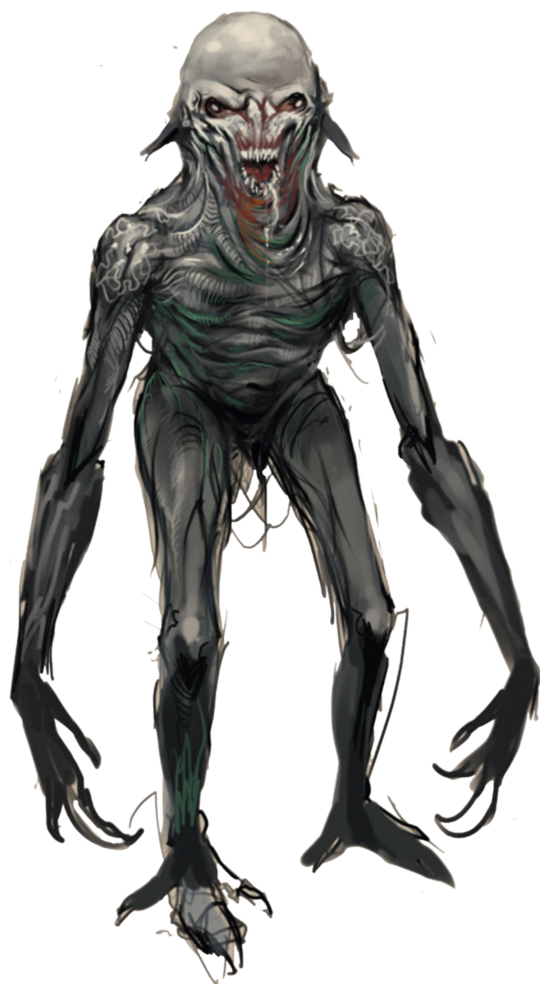
Claws scratched on the beams to the left and another monster suddenly jumped from beneath the bridge. The others ran forth in amazing leaps. The stranger turned in place, his sword, unsheathed gods know when, flashed. The head of the creature climbing the bridge was catapulted two yards into the air, trailing blood. The white haired man jumped into the midst of the other creatures, swirled, hacking swiftly left and right. The monsters, flailing their arms and howling, lunged at him from all sides, not caring for the luminous blade cutting them like a razor.

Andrzej Sapkowski, Something more

The creation of the nekker was inspired by the creatures that Geralt fought in one of Sapkowski's short stories. The scene featuring the fight against the misshapen horde of murderous midgets was so expressive that we began working on the appearance of a new opponent. The nekker is the final effect, and though it's somewhat different from the monsters from the literary original, it certainly is their worthy successor.

Nekkers are small, humanoid creatures that live in forests. There, according to rumor, they dig underground tunnels which they use to move about swiftly and efficiently. Stooping humanoids with long upper limbs that stretch almost to the ground and end with sharp claws, they resemble misshapen, deformed children. Their hairless heads tucked onto the torsos make them look comical, but this is countered by their toothed maws.

Despite their small size, nekkers should not be underestimated. They're mortally dangerous because they hunt in packs. Though one nekker is a meager opponent at best, a large group is a terrifying killing machine that is constantly hungry. Many unwary travelers of woods and forests have become victims of their appetite.





Troll

One day, I ride up and what do I see? A bridge. And under that bridge sits a troll and demands every passerby pays him. Those who refuse have a leg injured, sometimes both. So I go to the alderman: „How much will you give me for that troll?" He's amazed. „What are you talking about?" he asks, „Who will repair the bridge if the troll's not there? He repairs it regularly with the sweat of his brow, solid work, first rate. It's cheaper to pay his toll."

Andrzej Sapkowski, The Voice of Reason

After years of living near human abodes and some level of coexistence, it's difficult to clearly classify trolls as monsters. It's an intelligent race (though one should not count on a high level of that intelligence) that can be reasoned with. Trolls are good craftsmen, especially when it comes to wooden construction – a troll living under a bridge and collecting tolls for crossing it is nearly proverbial. One must keep in mind, however, that above all else trolls are huge, not very bright brutes. Trolls form a family with a single partner, similar to marriages, and their family life often resembles that of humans, with all its bright and dark moments.

As they have lived near humans for so long, trolls have adopted some of their customs, like the use of primitive clothes. They're also familiar with jewelry, though it's not certain if they properly understand the function and meaning of the items they use as such. Still, a wagon wheel worn around the neck, a lantern or armor elements seem to fit their aesthetic tastes. Their superior size allows them to use large sacks or barrels as small pouches and containers. The illustrations present a gallery of troll figures, along with the uses they found for abandoned, acquired or stolen items produced by their smaller neighbors.

We wanted The Witcher trolls to be different than the stereotypical image of the species, widely popularized by games and films. As you can see, the final concept is far removed from the initial sketches. The squat body, long hands and short legs still make it misshapen and grotesque, however we decided that an inversion of proportions was in order. The troll's overgrown head is firmly placed on the torso, thus it seems the creature has no neck. The appearance and singular traits of individual specimens differ, as can be clearly seen from the above combinations.







Rotfiend

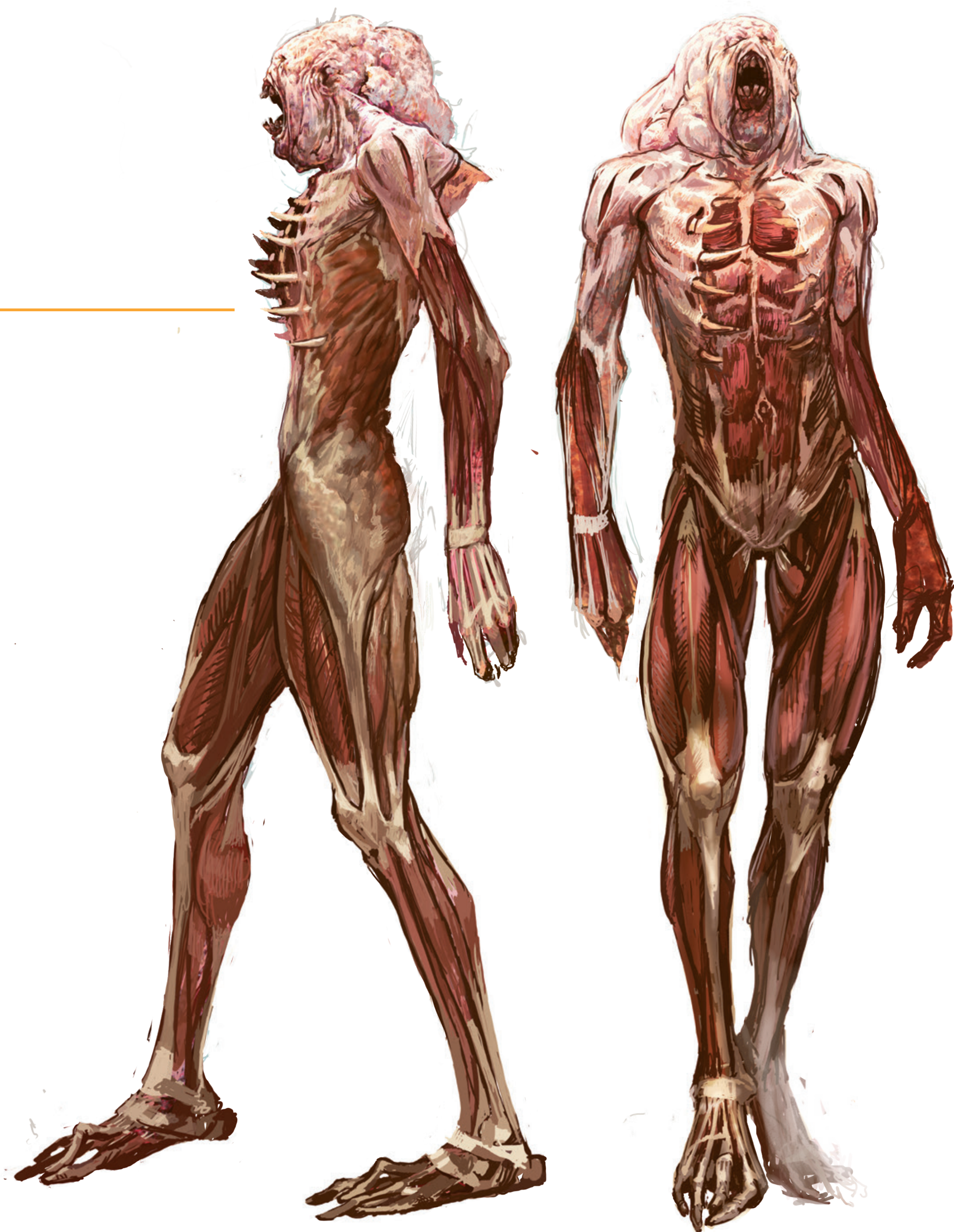
- Geralt pointed out the last hanged man, who, though dangled high, had bloody stumps gashed with claws and with visible bones. – Look. It's the work of ghouls.
- Wraiths? – Zoltan Chivay stepped back and spat.
- Necrophages?

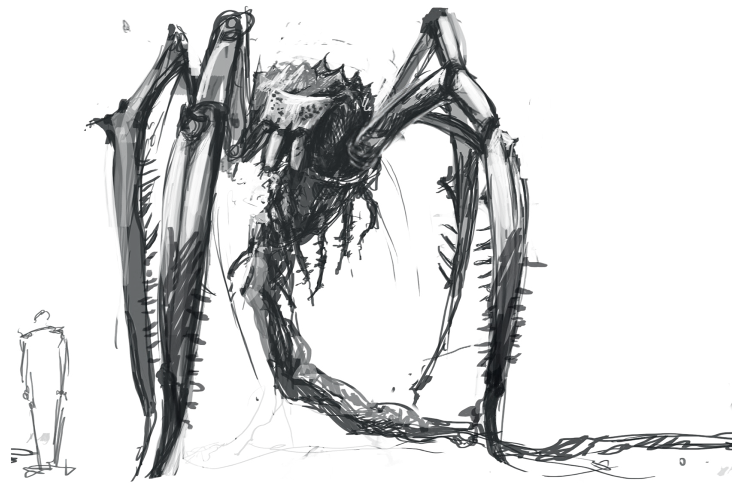
Andrzej Sapkowski, Baptism of Fire

Rotfiends are the distant relatives of ghouls, members of the broad family of necrophages – creatures feeding on human and animal corpses. When making this creature, our graphic artists had a lot of leeway to give it as disgusting a presence as possible. They achieved it by combining an anatomically nearly human appearance with disgusting deformities.

The rotfiend's head draws attention immediately. Its eyes disappear in folds of white, dough-like flesh. Its maw is a gaping hole filled with crooked yellow teeth. The back of its skull, covered with outgrowths, is swollen with the gases gathering inside. The creature's frame resembles a lean humanoid, but that's all it has in common with any living creature. The rotfiend's body is almost skinless, revealing knots of muscles. These grant it dexterity and agility, its main combat assets. The front of its chest is adorned with sharp breastbone and rib spurs.

Just like other necrophages, the rotfiend is also a post-conjunction creature, the result of the Conjunction of the Spheres – a magical cataclysm that brought new species and monsters, usually hostile to humans, to the Witcher universe. The rotfiend doesn't have an ecological niche, so one doesn't disturb the balance of natural relationships by killing it.





Arachas

Because even an orchid only resembles a flower in Ysgith sometimes, and in reality is a venomous arachas. We'll have to keep Dandelion on short leash, make sure he doesn't touch anything. Especially since there's no shortage of plants that like to supplement their chlorophyll diet with a piece of meat there. With sprouts rivaling the effectiveness of arachas venom in contact with skin.

Andrzej Sapkowski, Baptism of Fire

Before the above final appearance of the arachas was settled, many other concepts of its visage were created. The Polish name, crabspider, was our main inspiration - mainly things associated with the animals it's composed of. We knew from the beginning that the creature would be an overgrown hybrid of both arthropods. Its camouflage abilities and the symbiosis that real-life hermit crabs share with sea anemones inspired our artists to make it similar to that creature. The predator's uneven armor provides its thorax and forelimbs with ample protection, but the monster's vulnerable abdomen requires additional protection. The specimen guarding the entrance to Iorveth's hideout covers its hindquarters in a huge shell.

Only a few casual notes about the creature can be found on the pages of Andrzej Sapkowski's novels. What does a creature that is a hybrid of a crustacean and an arachnid look like? Why is it called what it is? On one hand, the lack of a more detailed description made our work more difficult, but on the other, the artists designing the creature had more leeway. The illustrations of the evolution of its appearance prove that, as do the various versions of individual specimens. The "forest" variants are especially interesting, as the creature uses either a tree-trunk or a huge pinecone – with the latter helping its camouflage and mimicry. Thanks to such camouflage, the arachas is able to blend with its surroundings perfectly, and await clueless victims.





FLASHBACKS



A gazebo, warmth, the smell of flowers, and the heavy, monotonous buzzing of bees. He himself, on his knees, handing a rose to an ashen-haired woman whose locks were scattered about from beneath a thin golden circlet. The fingers of the hand that took the rose from his hand were adorned with rings with emeralds, huge green cabochons.
- Return here – says the woman. - Return here, should you change your mind. Your destiny will await.
I never returned, he thought. I never... returned there.
I never returned to... Where?

Andrzej Sapkowski, The Sword of Destiny





The player's decisions and choices have consequences for their story. Helping Vernon or allying with Iorveth, defending Vergen, relieving the Scoia'tael – these events are recalled through retrospections – partly animated drawings, illustrating important moments and the story's turning points.

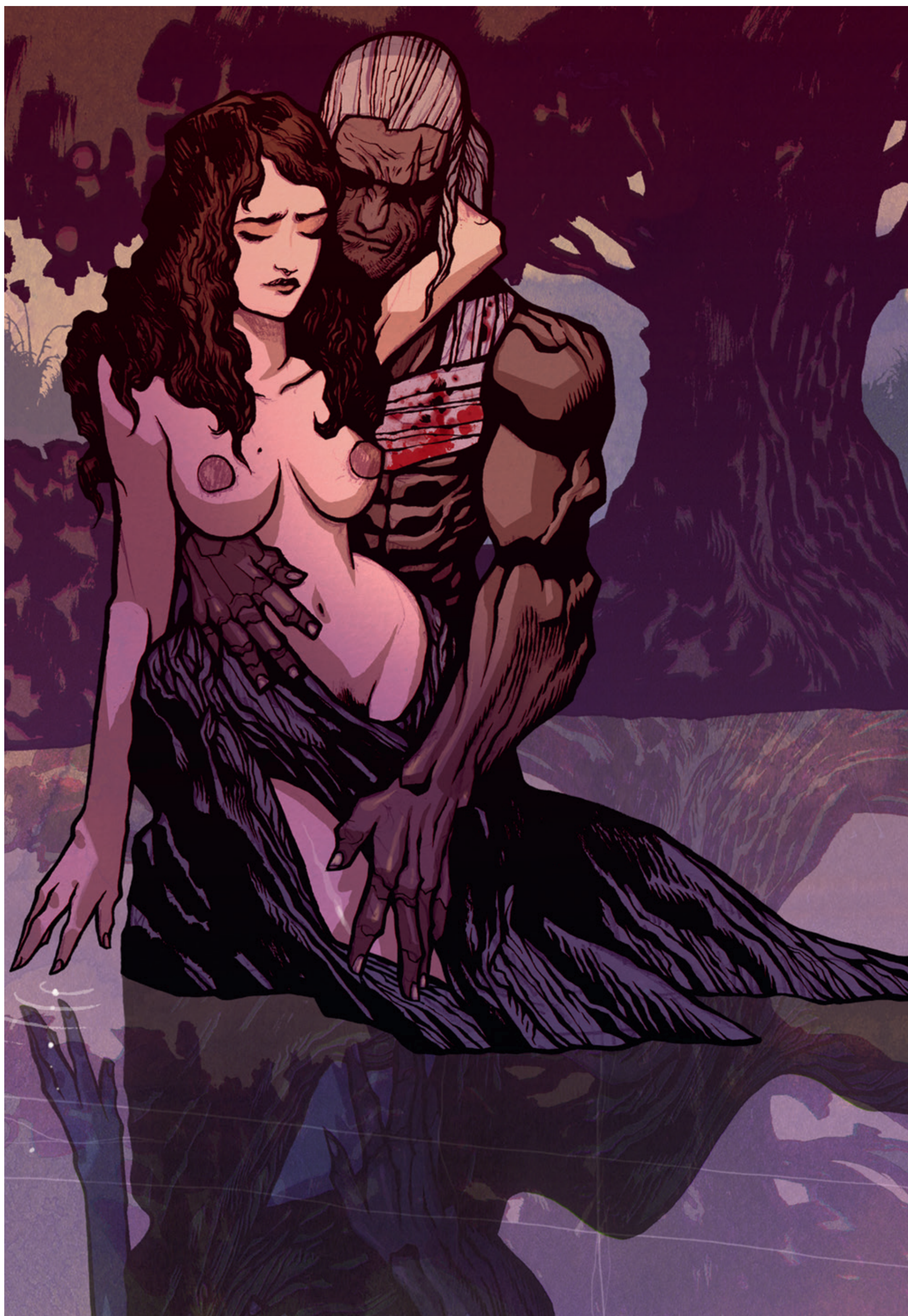
These drawings also depict another, equally important element – the memories of the witcher's past. Combined with the narrative, they shed some light on certain facts that our hero himself was not aware of until now. The combination of retrospections and memories completes the background of the story told in The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings. This and the following pages depict some of them.



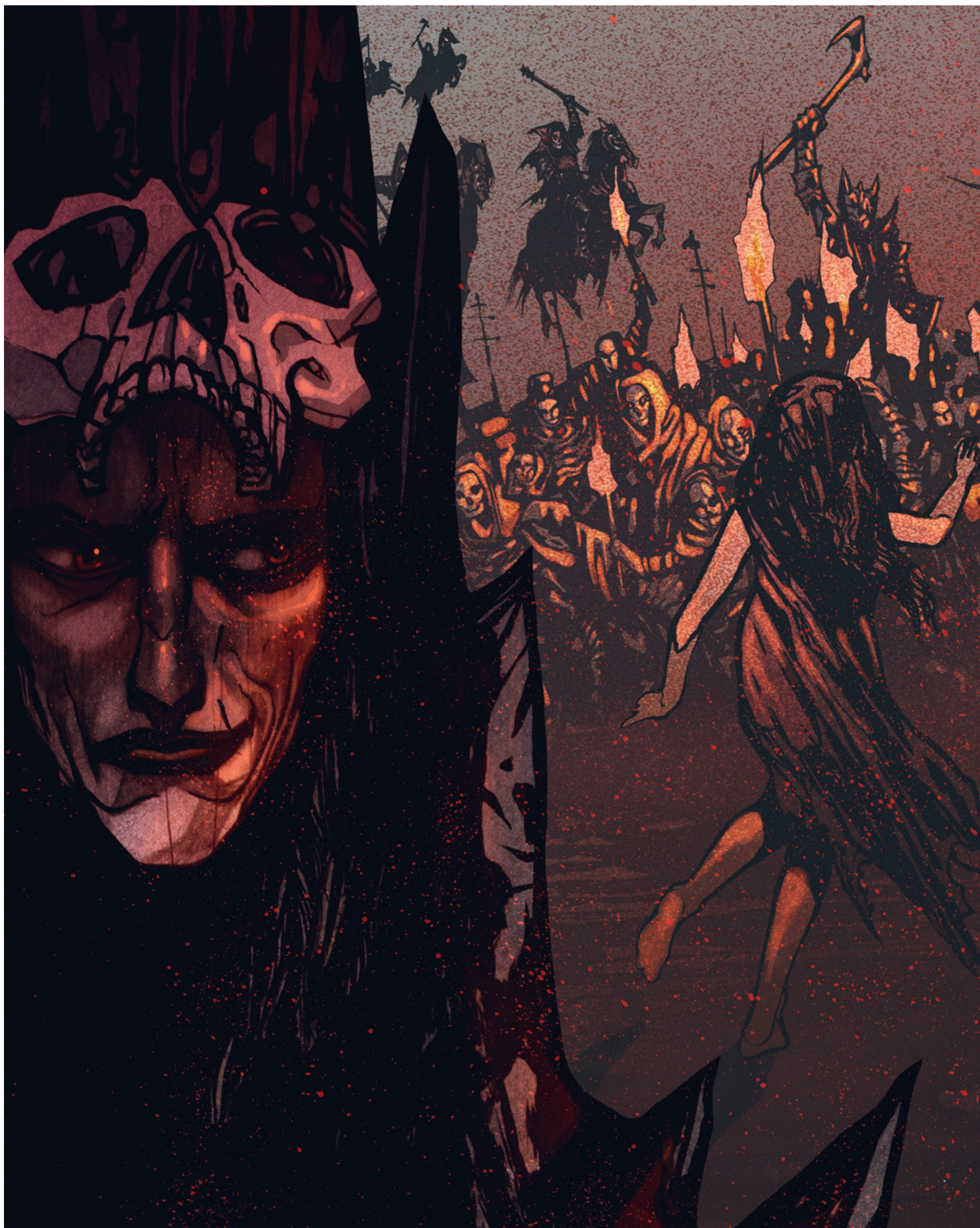














COVER ARTS



Posters found on the following pages were created to promote the game. They depict Geralt in the context of various story elements that are essential to the next installment of the saga we are creating..

















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